BM730
B56

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
FEB 21 1952
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
BM730
.B56

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

https://archive.org/details/studiesinjewishp00bett

STUDIES IN
JEWISH PREACHING

THE

Henry and Ida Krolik

MEMORIAL PUBLICATIONS

VOLUME I

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
FEB 21 1952
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

STUDIES IN
JEWISH PREACHING

*

MIDDLE AGES

BY ISRAEL BETTAN, D.D.
Professor of Homiletics and Midrash
Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE PRESS
CINCINNATI, 1939

COPYRIGHT, 1939, BY
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE PRESS

PRINTED IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO THE
MEMORY OF MY MOTHER
ANNA ITTA

PREFACE

TO affirm, as did Taine in the celebrated Preface to his *History of English Literature*, that the pulpit discourses of a people reveal the life and spirit of its religious creed, and that, moreover, they constitute an important branch of its literature, is to give only belated recognition to an old Jewish conviction. Some sixteen centuries before Taine, Jewish teachers proclaimed the supreme importance of the homiletical literature of their people, in words that are as grave as they are quaint. "Wouldst thou," they asked rhetorically, "get to know Him who called the world into being? Then, study Agada (homiletical literature): for thus wilt thou come to know the Holy One and cling to His ways." And, indeed, for these many centuries the study of sermons has formed a part of the educational curriculum of the Jew. For Jewish literature is essentially a religious literature; the Jew, therefore, could not but view the homilies of the great preachers as the 'belles lettres' of his literary artists, offering him recreation, inspiration, and sustaining comfort. Thus, when the student of the Halaḥa, or Jewish law, wearied of his special study, he found mental relaxation in the Agada, in the works of the preachers. When the man of piety, punctilious in the observance of the Law, sought to escape the peril of formal routine, he drank from the wells of inspiration dug by the homiletical masters, and felt his faith replenished, his visions renewed. When the stings of persecution and of poverty had wrung from the Jew the cry of pain, and the tragic conditions of his life wrapped his soul in gloom and despair, he turned to the inspiriting words of the poets in the pulpit, and regained his patience, his courage, and his hope.

Yet, even in the case of the Jew, this undoubted apprecia-

ion of the secret strength of the sermon extends largely to the homiletical products of the remote past. It appears that peoples with a long literary history find it difficult to pay due deference to the more immediate past. They search the dim vista of their childhood so intently, that they cannot but overlook the brighter and more extensive prospects of their maturer years. Their days before yesterday are so numerous, that their yesterday only too easily merges into their today. And so, the Jew reverences the past, but chiefly the distant past. He diligently studies the homilies of his preachers, but mostly those of the ancient preachers. A sermon preached in the thirteenth century is to this scion of ancient scribes an almost modern composition, and, by this very token, not quite worthy of his reverent study.

This tendency to clothe with excessive reverence the hoary products of a remote past, to which older races are generally subject, is greatly intensified, in the case of the Jew, by the odium he attaches to the word "medieval." If he devotes his interest and labors to the homiletical works of the earlier period, it is partly because he disrelishes the middle period, and would fain disparage its literary creations. And, indeed, to the Jew the term "medieval" is fraught with too much terror and sorrow to be anything but repulsive. Yet, as an epithet, "medieval" may accurately describe the political and social conditions of the time; it cannot, in any legitimate sense, be used to characterize the literature of the period, least of all the religious literature of the Jew. In Jewish history, there is, to be sure, a long and dark period, longer and darker for the Jew than for anyone else, that bears the significant sobriquet: The Dark Ages. But Jewish literature knows no "dark ages"; and in its history, the term "medieval" is only the directing finger on a signpost, only a convenient hand on the dial of time.

It must be evident to any student of Jewish homiletics that the sermon as a literary composition attained its standard form, not in the earlier midrashic period, but in the later middle period. From the new life and spirit that began to pulsate through Europe with the revived interest in the learning of the ancient world, preaching, even Jewish preaching, received its strongest impetus, as it did some of its finer qualities. The extent to which the Jewish pulpit was influenced by the conditions and forces of the new age, we shall discover when we turn our attention to the sermons of the representative preachers. Suffice it to say here that from the thirteenth through the eighteenth century, a most prolific period in Jewish preaching, we see the sermon take on more and more the form of an elaborate address, in which not only the ideas of the past, but the thought of the day as well, find their proper place and emphasis. It is the sermon as evolved through the middle period, then, that forms the real basis of the pulpit discourse of today.

Our purpose in this volume is to ascertain the nature, the essential qualities, of the sermon as preached in the Synagogue of the Middle Ages. We have no intention to write a history of Jewish preaching. No one, least of all the present writer, would venture to deviate from the pathway trod by the doughty pioneer Leopold Zunz, whose monumental work *Die gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden*, is still the chief source of our information on the subject. Besides, the need of the hour is not for more information about preaching, but for a more just appreciation of the sermons preached. To know all about a great book, is the duty of the scholar; to know something of its meaning and purpose, is the cultural task of all intelligent men. In the sphere of literature, to chronicle events, name authors and list books, is only the first step of the historian; to give value and permanence to the knowledge

thus imparted, he must turn literary critic, taking it upon himself to enlighten the mind by clear analysis, and to balance the judgment by sound appraisal. At any rate, we propose, not to tell a story, but to paint a picture: to reproduce the salient features of the sermon by portraying the character, the aims and achievements, of the most important figures in the pulpit of the Middle Ages.

Most of the chapters composing the volume, specifically chapters 2 and 4–8, originally appeared as separate studies in the Hebrew Union College Annual; and to the Board of Editors the thanks of the author are due for their kind permission to reprint the articles in the present volume. If the wider interest conduced by the new disposition also result in a deeper, more sympathetic understanding of the homiletical literature of the past, the writer will feel amply rewarded for his humble effort.

Cincinnati, Ohio. ISRAEL BETTAN

CONTENTS

PREFACE
PAGE vii

I. EARLY PREACHING IN THE SYNAGOGUE
PAGE 3

II. JACOB ANATOLI: *A Thirteenth-century Liberal*
PAGE 49

III. BAḤYA BEN ASHER: *A Practical Mystic*
PAGE 89

IV. ISAAC ARAMA: *The Preacher's Preacher*
PAGE 130

V. JUDAH MOSCATO: *Child of the Renaissance*
PAGE 192

VI. AZARIAH FIGO: *Critic of Life*
PAGE 227

VII. EPHRAIM LUNTSHITZ: *Champion of Change*
PAGE 273

VIII. JONATHAN EYBESHITZ: *Passionate Pleader*
PAGE 317

ERRATA

Read Halaka *for* Halaha *on pages vii, 89, 207, 209, 317.*

Read halakic *for* halahic *on pages 232, 324, 404.*

Read gottesdienstlichen *for* gottesdienstliche *on page ix.*

Read manner *for* manor *on page 371, line 12.*

STUDIES IN
JEWISH PREACHING

I.

EARLY PREACHING

IN THE SYNAGOGUE

1

THE sermon is the peculiar product of the Jewish mind; it is a unique creation of the Jewish spirit. True, in its evolution through the centuries, it has gathered stimulus and strength from every new current of thought, from every fresh form of literary expression; but it had its origin in the service of the ancient Synagogue, and it has continued, to this very day, to form an integral part of Jewish worship.

Though the earliest and most inspired preachers of the faith were the prophets of Israel, the Jewish sermon, as it appeared in the initial stages of its unfoldment, was no direct offspring of the prophetic tradition. It owed its rise and early growth not to the labors of the prophets but to the activities of the scribes. To be sure, religious discourses of most edifying and stirring nature resounded through the hills of Judea long before the land was dotted with "little sanctuaries." When charged with a weighty message to their people, the prophets spoke words of truth and admonition that still echo in the hearts of men. But their utterances, while endued with the finest qualities of the noble pulpit discourse, could neither in function nor in technique foreshadow the sermon as we know it. The prophetic message reached the people as a new revelation, comforting at times, but more often disturbing. The Temple ritual neither anticipated nor welcomed it. Not infrequently, people and priest, startled by the vehement de-

nunciation of their conduct, viewed the bearer of the message in the light of an intruder, who came to interrupt and even to undermine the sacrificial service. Nor could the message of the prophet, being an original pronouncement, body forth the peculiar technique of the sermon, a technique suitable only for a type of discourse that aims to interpret and apply established truth. It was not until the Synagogue arose and became the repository of ancient truth and the center of a new mode of worship, in which instruction supplemented prayer and song, that the roots of the Jewish sermon could be planted.

The rise of the Synagogue falls in a period of Jewish history too shrouded in obscurity to permit of detailed study and analysis. When the light of documentary evidence breaks on the horizon, we behold a full-grown, a robust and ubiquitous institution. Yet the supposition that it was born in the Babylonian exile as the child of prophetic inspiration, and reared and nurtured in Palestine by the fathers of the rabbinic tradition,[1] is quite reasonable and may well be accepted as true. When the Babylonian hosts had overwhelmed the nation and led it into captivity, it seemed as if the career of another ancient tribe had definitely and permanently terminated. And, indeed, destruction of Temple and loss of country struck the nation with cataclysmic force and filled the hearts of the unfortunate exiles with unutterable grief and despair. Whither should they turn for refuge, comfort, and enlargement? It was at this most critical juncture, it would seem, that a new and unique institution, in almost miraculous fashion, made its appearance in the life of the Jewish people. The devoted disciples of the great prophets, men of faith and piety and hope that they were, came forward to show the way and rescue their forlorn brethren from despondency and im-

[1] K. Kohler, *Origins of Synagogue and Church*, pp. 25–35, Macmillan, 1929.

pending dissolution. In place of Temple altar, now overthrown and deserted, they set up prayer and song, and for acts of priestly ministration they proffered words of instruction and inspiration. These devotional assemblies, which kept alive the drooping spirit of the people during those years of greatest peril, may be regarded, then, as the true forerunners of the synagogues. For the lessons learned in the days of bitter exile were never to be forgotten; and the "little sanctuaries," first raised on foreign soil and later transplanted to a more hospitable clime, were never to be superseded by the glories of the restored Temple. In fact, when under Ezra and his successors the religious life of the people was reorganized and the Temple cult revived, synagogues continued to spring up throughout the land and congregational worship to grow and expand; until later, when the Pharisees, heirs to the achievements of the Scribes, had attained power and influence in the new commonwealth, the Temple itself included within its precincts a house of worship such as the synagogue represented.[2]

Now, in these synagogues, prayer, though an essential element of worship, formed only one of its component parts. Instruction in the Law complemented prayer in the order of the service. For worship, Jewishly conceived, is the service of the heart, which is prayer,[3] supplemented by the joy of the heart, which is Torah.[4] Accordingly, the synagogal liturgy, we find, is more than a book of prayers; it is essentially a manual of divine worship, comprising many prayers of adoration, thanksgiving, and petition, but abounding likewise in vital religious instruction. Impressive recitals of the salient facts of sacred history and solemn reiterations of the fundamental principles of the faith find their place, alongside of the purely devotional elements, in the service. And so, too,

[2] Yoma, 7, 1; Sotah, 7, 7–8. [3] Taa'n. 2a. [4] Cant. r. 3, 9.

the reading from the Scroll, with the subsequent interpretation of the passage read, came to form as much a part of worship as the prayers and meditations.

While unable to determine with any degree of certainty when the practice became an integral part of Jewish worship, we know that the custom of reading from the Law before large assemblies of the people is of early origin. Every seventh year, during the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel appeared before the Lord, the Law had to be read in the hearing of the entire assembly, in accordance with the Mosaic command.[5] In the days of Josiah, we are informed, the King himself gathered all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant.[6] Likewise, in the time of Ezra, when the people had gathered together on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, they called upon the Scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses and read it unto them; whereupon, we are told, Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, and the Levites caused the people to understand the Law: "And they read in the book, in the Law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."[7]

That in the days of Ezra, as it is clearly intimated in the passage from the Book of Nehemiah, the portion read from the Law had to be translated and interpreted, is not at all surprising, though the fact produced consequences of the utmost significance. For Hebrew was no longer understood by the masses of the people. Returning to Palestine after a long sojourn in Babylon, they brought with them a new language, the vernacular of the land of their exile. Aramaic had become their mother tongue. The function of the interpreter, therefore, was an important one. In fact, when somewhat later the reading from the Law was incorporated into the weekly

[5] Deut. 31, 10–13. [6] II Kings, 23, 1–2. [7] Nehem. 8, 1–8.

service of the Synagogue, as was inevitable, and Aramaic, due largely to the increased influence of other countries over Palestine, continued to be the vernacular of the land, the office of the interpreter, or Meturgeman, as he was called, became as prominent as it was indispensable. The task assigned to him, while not a difficult one, made him a conspicuous figure in the congregation. And, at first, he was quite content with the position he occupied and with the simple duties he had to perform. His was the function to render into the vernacular, verse by verse, or, in the case of the prophetic selection which followed the pentateuchal reading, three verses at a time, as read from the Hebrew text by a member of the congregation.[8] Yet the function, though simple and clearly defined, was capable of further expansion; and, when the official interpreter grew restive under the monotonous routine, he knew how to improve the opportunity. He began to amplify the thought of the passage read, to expatiate on the content rather than restrict himself to the literal meaning. He found it quite easy, and much more to his liking, to paraphrase the text, and to illumine its ideas with illustrations from personal observation and other sources. That the innovation met with the approval of the congregation, is hardly to be doubted, since it succeeded in converting a mechanical routine into a congenial task, and an unattractive procedure into a pleasant performance. However, as time went on and factional differences arose, the new role freely assumed by the official interpreter could not but create discontent and dissension. For each faction sought to buttress its position with scriptural evidence. The Scriptures thus became the battle-ground of conflicting groups. Interpretation ceased to be the innocuous preoccupation of some synagogal official; it became the vital concern of large

[8] Meg. 4, 4.

segments of the congregation. The power of the official interpreter to construe a passage in such a way as either to corroborate or to refute views much in dispute, caused considerable irritation and threatened to disrupt the whole institution of congregational worship. The official had to be shorn of his power, if his office were not to be abolished. Hence, there arose the demand for an authorized translation of the Hebrew text for use in the synagogal service, so that the interpreter might thus be confined to the fixed translation and have no opportunity to discourse freely as hitherto. But the proposed change, aside from calling into existence an Aramaic version of the Bible, popularly known as the "Targum," failed of its original purpose. The device, while resolving the immediate difficulty, had the effect of transforming an exciting function into a tame routine. Neither the people nor the interpreter welcomed the change: the former, thoroughly familiar with the obvious meaning of the text, craved for more elaborate treatment of its content; while the latter, denied the opportunity to exercise his mental powers, found the task devoid of interest and pleasure. This widespread and persistent dissatisfaction with the new disposition led in the end to the abolition of the office of the interpreter and the discontinuance of the use of the Aramaic translation in the weekly service of the synagogue.[9]

Yet an institution that fails to function efficiently and falls therefore into disuse, only serves to bring out in full relief the great popular need that gave it birth. That need, now wholly unsatisfied, became even more urgent and insistent. For the devotional elements of the service could not still the hunger of the people for edifying instruction. The Jew has always wanted to serve his God with his mind as well as with his

[9] *See* Berliner, *Targum Onkelos*, pp. 73–76, Berlin, 1884; Friedmann, *Onkelos*, pp. 81–88, Wien, 1896.

heart. It was in response to this legitimate longing of the worshipper, that a new functionary made his appearance in the Synagogue. The "Meturgeman," or interpreter, had disappeared; the learned and skilled "Darshan," or preacher, came to take his place. The literal translation had become distasteful; the "drashah," or sermon, brought fresh interest and zest to the worshipper. Thus, "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."[10]

2

The Hebrew designation for sermon, "drashah," is derived from the word "darash," which means to search, to investigate, to interpret. The "darshan," the preacher, is the expounder, the explorer, the creative interpreter. He busies himself with the exposition and appreciation of the deeper meaning and significance of the scriptural text. Not content with the literal interpretation of the text, he attempts to penetrate more deeply into its spirit and derive from it interpretations not visible on the surface. He proposes to interpret the text from the ethical and devotional point of view. His aim is to admonish rather than to legislate, to edify rather than to instruct, to appeal to the imagination rather than to the sense of obedience and conformity. The purpose of the "drashah," then, is to build an exegetic scaffolding to buttress and sustain a sound religious outlook. It is, therefore, essentially poetic, imaginative, inspiring.

The early homilies preached in the synagogue, as we find them preserved in the midrashic collections,[11] consisted of

[10] Jud. 14, 14.

[11] These collections, compiled by different editors during a period of approximately one thousand years, are quite numerous. The best known and most important are the Mekilta to Exodus, the Sifra to Leviticus, and the Sifré to Numbers and Deuteronomy, all hailing from the tannaitic period; the Rabboth to the entire Pentateuch and the five Scrolls: Canticles, Ruth,

the exposition of the inner content of a biblical verse or passage taken from the scriptural lesson of the week. At first, the thought and the form of the homily were simple and natural. Sometimes a single homily, more often a series of homilies, woven around the scriptural text, gave point and sanction to the preacher's thought. Thus, for example, in commenting on the biblical statement that when the Israelites were at last on their way to Canaan, "God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near,"[12] an ancient preacher would give to the word כי the more common rendition of "because" rather than that of the unusual "although," in which case the directness of the road leading to their final destination would be the chief reason for its disqualification. For, God said, if I cause them to reach the land speedily, they will immediately take possession of the fields and the vineyards and become so occupied with their material tasks that they will have no leisure for the study of Torah; I shall, therefore, detain them in the desert for forty years, where they shall live on Manna and the waters of the Well, and busy themselves with Torah until its teachings become imbedded in their very being.[13] Or, to cite another example of the same type of homily, the text: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and mine ordinances, which if a man do, he shall live by them: I am the Lord,"[14] is fraught with deep significance. In the first place, the clause: "which if a man do," points to the universal character of God's law, confirming the truth that even a gentile who conforms his life to the principles of the Torah may take his place beside the High Priest. Again, the statement: "He shall

Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther, all of unequal age and character; the Tanḥuma homilies to the whole Pentateuch, of which we possess two different compilations; and the Pesikta homilies, comprising two separate volumes, and revolving around the Holy Days and other special occasions.

[12] Ex. 13, 17. [13] Mek. בשלח, chap. 1. [14] Lev. 18, 5.

live by them," discloses another important principle: that the statutes and ordinances of the Torah shall be so observed as to enhance the life of the individual devotee and not imperil it.[15]

But as time went on, the form of the homily grew more elaborate even as the ideas developed became more varied and complex. The first important change in the structure of the sermon made its appearance when a homily on an extraneous verse was made to introduce the text proper. The introductory homily, or proem, opened with a verse from the Hagiographa, which apparently was not at all related to the text in question. As the preacher proceeded with the introduction, however, it became quite obvious that, at least in the last part of it, the thought of the main text was clearly adumbrated, if not explicitly expressed. Thus, in a sermon preached on the text: "And the Lord called unto Moses,"[16] in which the thought is stressed that God's call comes only to those who are well prepared to endure His overpowering presence, the introductory homily opens with the verse: "Bless the Lord, ye angels of His, ye mighty in strength, that fulfil His word, hearkening unto the voice of His word."[17] The task of the preacher is so to interpret every phrase contained in this extraneous verse as to lead him directly to the pentateuchal text he has chosen for his discourse. "Ye angels of His," refers to the prophets, who sometimes bear this designation. Is it not written: "Then spoke Haggai the Lord's messenger"?[18] "Ye mighty in strength," can refer to none but those who observe the sabbatical year; for, though constrained to behold their fields untilled for an entire year, they yet continue to pay their taxes and bear other burdens without a murmur. Such men are of heroic mould. "That

[15] Sifra, אחרי מות, chap. 13. [16] Lev. 1, 1.
[17] Ps. 103, 20. [18] Ḥag. 1, 13.

fulfil His word," may well be applied to the Israelites who stood at Sinai, of whom it is said that, when the book of the covenant had been read to them, they exclaimed: "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do and obey."[19] And the final phrase: "hearkening unto the voice of His word," can have reference only to Moses. For while myriads of his people, standing at the foot of the mount, were so overawed by God's presence that they cried out: "If we hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore, then we shall die,"[20] Moses spoke with God face to face and lived. Therefore, the call of God came to him alone, as the pentateuchal text has it: "And the Lord called unto Moses."[21]

Whether the proem was devised to familiarize the people with those portions of the Bible rarely used in synagogal worship, or to stimulate greater interest and attentiveness in the congregation, certain it is that the novel method provided the sermon with a unique introduction, and the preacher with an exceptional opportunity to exercise his skill and ingenuity.

Another innovation that served to expand the form of the sermon and increase its practical usefulness, was introduced somewhat later, and it attained considerable popularity though its vogue persisted only for a while. When, at the beginning of the third century of the present era, the traditional laws were codified in a compendium known as the Mishnah, and when still later, about the beginning of the sixth century, the discussions and comments of subsequent teachers were added to it to form the stupendous Talmud, the preachers began to feel, it would seem, that the masses of the people, with little leisure for study, should be afforded the opportunity, while listening to words of edification, to become also acquainted with some of the laws pertaining to the

[19] Ex. 24, 7. [20] Deut. 5, 22. [21] Lev. r. 1, 1.

proper observance of the Sabbath, the Holy Days, and other special occasions. Accordingly, many of them thought it wise and proper to preface the sermon with the statement and explanation of some pertinent legal practice. This prefatory statement, while purporting to instruct the people in traditional law, partook of the character of a homily. It was legalistic in intent and in part of its content, but homiletical in structure and development. It usually opened with the formula of ילמדנו רבינו, "let our teachers teach us," as if to say, before launching upon the theme of the discourse, let us call to mind a rabbinic regulation that is intimately associated with the spirit of the day or with the standard requirements of the religious life, and closely related to the deeper content of the chosen text. And, even as the proem, this peculiar homily was so skilfully constructed that in its closing phrases it actually suggested the biblical text. Thus, for example, a sermon on the text: "Now the Lord said unto Abram: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee,'"[22] in which the thought is developed that when God in His great mercy causes a man to be rescued from the unfavorable environment in which his lot is cast, it is because he has by his conduct proved himself superior to that environment and is therefore transferred to a place where his services may be used to better advantage, opens with the discussion of a question of ritual law and is preceded by the customary formula: "Let our teachers teach us." The question is raised whether the confession of faith which every Jew is obligated to proclaim daily, and which begins with the ancient watchword: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one,"[23] may be recited while one's body is in motion. Rabbinic authorities are quoted to substantiate the view that while the

[22] Gen. 12, 1. [23] Deut. 6, 4.

major portion of that liturgical passage may be recited in any position or posture, the opening sentence, asserting the principle of God's unity, must be pronounced in a fixed and upright position. Nothing should be done that would divert the mind from the absolute concentration required. Then the preacher takes occasion to point out the great merit that lies in the immaculate exactitude of religious observances. Abraham, in the opinion of some teachers, showed great zeal for traditional practices. Though placed in a pagan environment, he yet strove to meet the minutest requirement of ritual law. It was this spirit that won for him the title of "friend of God,"[24] and it was the same spirit that brought about his speedy redemption from the stifling atmosphere of his birth-place, as is indicated by the divine command addressed to him: "Get thee out of thy country."[25]

It is difficult to determine with absolute certainty whether this legalistic exordium preceded the proem in the homiletical structure, or superseded it. In the existing collections, in which many of these homilies are still preserved, we may find support for either assumption. In some cases, both are given; in others, the proem is missing. The likelihood is that some preachers found both approaches natural and serviceable. By using the two introductory forms, they were able to impart to their listeners, in the proem, a wider knowledge of the Bible, and in the legalistic homily, a better acquaintance with traditional practices. At all events, with the greater diffusion of talmudic knowledge among the people, the need for such simple instruction as the legalistic homily afforded must have considerably decreased, and the new homiletical form, once quite popular, lost its appeal.

The body of the sermon comprises the homiletical interpretation of the text and the development of the ideas derived

[24] Isa. 41, 8. [25] Tanḥ. לך לך, sec. 1.

from it. As the thought of the sermon, however sound and weighty, must at least be suggested in the text, if it is to obtain authority over men's minds, the task of the preacher is not to demonstrate the reasonableness of his views and the urgency of his appeal, but to establish complete harmony between the text and his message. To achieve this end, he invokes the aid of every method of exposition known to the literary student. Aside from weighing and probing the significance of every word and phrase, he relates stories, weaves legends and allegories, invents parables and fables, all that he may make the ideas deduced from the text luminous and impressive, and thus gain highest sanction for his own religious outlook.

The homiletical exegesis of the early preachers, though vast and varied, is susceptible of definite classification. A careful analysis of the diverse exegetical materials extant will disclose that, in the main, the authors employed five different types of texts. There is, in the first place, the Transparent Text, that is, a kind of text the thought of which, though clear and obvious, is yet capable of wider application, and whose terms, though intelligible as commonly understood, lend themselves to stronger emphasis. Thus, for example, the text: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up,"[26] is made to yield the thought that to fulfil God's law one need not undergo such inconveniences as will prove too irksome. The law, while exacting obedience, is not calculated to overburden man. At any time, and in any fit place, one's declaration of faith may be made.[27] Or, take the text: "And Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land,"[28] from

[26] Deut. 6, 7. [27] Lev. r. 27, 6. [28] Gen. 34, 1.

which the preacher deduces the thought that the most worthy woman is she who stays at home, and that gadding about is frequently woman's undoing.[29] Again, to cite an example of the same type of text in which not the general thought but a single familiar word of it is stressed with telling effect, take the verse: "Thou openest Thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."[30] The emphatic word here, says the preacher, is "desire." The Psalmist purposely refrains from saying: "and givest food," because while God may not always dispense material comforts, He invariably satisfies one's true desire, helping him to achieve what he really wants to have.[31] Or, in the text: "It is a tree of life to them that lay hold of it,"[32] simple as it is, we may discover, by accentuating one vital phrase, a more inclusive thought, one that is of universal significance. The wise man, we note, does not say that the Torah is a source of life to those who study it, for then the world would soon become lifeless. To lay hold of it must mean to grasp its worth, to make it secure, to support it, an accomplishment which is within the reach of all men.[33]

Then, in the second place, there is the Obscure Text, the text that presents a challenge to the interpreter, the text that seems to bristle with many difficulties, whether they be of a linguistic, a logical, a theological, or ethical character. These difficulties, it is the task of the homiletical expounder not merely to surmount, as is the case with the literary critic; being primarily a preacher, he is chiefly bent on subduing the most refractory text to the high purpose in hand. His concern is not with the question that puzzles, but with the answer that may uplift. Thus, to cite an example of a text that exhibits a stylistic flaw, take the verse: "Then shalt thou say unto them: 'Because your fathers have forsaken Me, saith the

[29] Tanḥ. וישלח, sec. 6. [30] Ps. 145, 16. [31] Ex. r. 25, 3.
[32] Prov. 3, 18. [33] Lev. r. 25, 1.

Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken Me, and have not kept my law.'"[34] The difficulty here is quite obvious: if they have forsaken God, it is superfluous to add that they have not kept His law; the addition is both repetitious and anticlimactic. Yet, in reality, observes the preacher, there is no redundancy here. The crux of the tragedy enacted by the fathers, the prophet pointed out, lay not in the fact that they had forsaken God, but rather in the fact that, having spurned His law, they had destroyed the very means by which they might find their way back to Him.[35] Or, consider the text: "And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying: 'Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel.' "[36] The pleonasm here is quite apparent: the "children of Israel" could be none other than the "house of Jacob." However, there is the possibility that the "house of Jacob" refers to the women, and the "children of Israel" to the men, in which case both phrases are needed. That the divine proclamation of Israel's consecration unto God should be addressed first to the women, is not at all surprising. For one thing, women are more susceptible to the religious appeal. Besides, theirs will be the duty to educate the young.[37]

Again, to cite an example of a text in which the apparent difficulty is not of a linguistic but of a logical nature, let us examine the verse: "And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all the substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran."[38] The last part of the sentence is translated rather freely; it should read, if rendered literally, "and the souls that they had made in Haran." But, of course, such a statement is fraught with

[34] Jer. 16, 11. [35] Lam. r. peth. 1. [36] Ex. 19, 3.
[37] Ex. r. 28, 2. [38] Gen. 12, 5.

inconceivable implications. The combined brain-power of civilized humanity could not produce a single gnat with the breath of life in it. Obviously, what we are invited to contemplate here is not a physical phenomenon but a spiritual fact. It must have reference to the patriarch's acts of hospitality, by which he succeeded in converting to the one God the many heathen strangers whom he had brought into his home and given shelter and comfort. These spiritual disciples of his were the souls that he had made in Haran. Hence, to bring a soul nigh unto God is to create it anew.[39] Similarly, the text: "These are the accounts of the tabernacle, even the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were rendered according to the commandment of Moses, through the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest,"[40] seems to baffle our understanding. Why should a man like Moses, whose character bears the divine attestation: "He is trusted in all my house,"[41] have felt constrained to render a financial account to the people? Evidently, there were men who charged Moses with having appropriated some of the funds for his own use, pointing no doubt to his sturdy physical appearance as the evidence of great material prosperity. When these innuendoes had reached Moses, he decided to submit an itemized statement of all expenditures.[42]

Then, again, there are texts that are obscured by theological incongruities and inconsistencies. Thus, for example, the scriptural verse: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night,"[43] presents an incongruous situation. The Lord God, who fills heaven and earth, is Himself obliged to

[39] Gen. r. 39, 14. [40] Ex. 38, 21. [41] Num. 12, 7.
[42] Tanḥ. Buber, פקודי, 4. [43] Ex. 13, 21.

go before the people, as if He were powerless to provide help from other sources! Yet the difficulty is only apparent. God chose to go before Israel, because He wished to apprise the nations of the earth of the great love He had for His people, that they might thus learn to treat with utmost respect the people of His choice. But, alas, adds the preacher, the nations of the world, far from paying Israel the honor due him, are actually seeking to crush his life by methods that are as various as they are violent![44]

And, finally, there is the text that is beclouded with an outgrown ethical ideal. In attempting to overcome this difficulty, the preacher is often compelled to distort the original meaning of the text. Yet this type of homiletical exegesis, indefensible though it be, helped the early preachers to retain their unbounded reverence for the Scriptures while they clung to their own more advanced ethical outlook. Thus, for example, the scriptural pronouncement: "In the sweat of thy face, thou shalt eat bread, till thou return unto the ground,"[45] clearly voices a conception of labor in sharp conflict with the views of later teachers. The preacher is loath to construe the verse in a sense that would stigmatize labor as a curse. He couples it, therefore, with the verse immediately preceding it, which reads: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field." The real curse, the preacher insists, is pronounced in this verse, and not in the subsequent one. When Adam had heard this startling sentence, that henceforth he would be like the beast of the field, living on the spontaneous grass rather than labor for his sustenance, cold beads of perspiration broke out and mantled his face. Whereupon God said unto him: "In the sweat of thy face," that is, in consequence of thy mortification as evidenced by the sweat covering thy face, "thou shalt eat

[44] Mek. בשלח (ויהי), chap. 1. [45] Gen. 3, 19.

bread," namely, be permitted to prepare thine own food, to live by thine own efforts.[46]

A third type of text, which the early preachers used extensively and to good purpose, is the Allegorical Text. This is a text from which the interpreter seeks to infer a thought not unlike the one expressed, though the process by which he arrives at it necessitates the substitution of the subject with another suggestively similar to it. Thus, for example, the verse: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,"[47] which conveys the thought that the wealth of the righteous, being honestly acquired, is a source of long and happy life, may also, by the judicious use of the allegorical method, be made to reflect a more specialized truth. The "fruit" of the righteous may stand for his offspring,[48] even as the "tree of life" is emblematic of Torah.[49] Hence the truth, graphically expressed, that the righteous man who dies childless is not therefore barren of progeny: the Torah which he mastered and by which he lived,—this is his offspring.[50] Thus, too, the text: "And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days,"[51] while describing the four kinds of plants that compose a definite ceremonial object, lends itself also to allegorical exposition. The four kinds of plants herein specified may be taken to represent the four types of men of which the Jewish group is composed. The "fruit of goodly trees," which is both palatable and fragrant, may typify the men who possess Torah and good deeds. The "branches of palm-trees," whose fruit though palatable is lacking in fragrance, may symbolize those men who though learned in Torah are deficient in good deeds. The "boughs of

[46] Gen. r. 20, 10. [47] Prov. 11, 30. [48] Micah, 6, 7.
[49] Prov. 3, 18. [50] Tanḥ. תזריע, 2. [51] Lev. 23, 40.

thick trees," which yield fragrance but no delicious fruit, may be emblematic of those men who can boast of good deeds but are devoid of knowledge of Torah. And the "willows of the brook," which are productive neither of fragrance nor of delicious fruit, may denote those men who are destitute of good deeds as well as of Torah. Accordingly, when these diverse types merge into one united body, even as the four kinds of plants combine to form one complete ceremonial object, the shortcoming of the one is redeemed by the strength of the other, and the preservation of the whole is assured.[52]

A fourth kind of text, of which the early preachers made frequent and effective use, is one that may be designated as the Relative Text. It is a text the homiletical significance of which appears in full force only when it is viewed in relation to a verse preceding it. Thus, the text: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord,"[53] when scanned in the light of the verse immediately preceding it, which reads: "And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord; and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses," will disclose a depth of meaning hitherto unsuspected. For it will then be found to accentuate the thought, that the paeans of praise and of triumph a people sings invariably flow from a life of faith.[54] Thus, too, the text: "Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim,"[55] holds little promise for the preacher of ideas until it is interpreted in relation to the verse that precedes it, which reads: "And the name of the place is called Massah, and Meribah, because of the striving of the children of Israel, and because they tried the Lord, saying: 'Is the Lord among us or not?'" A new thought then flashes upon the mind: when Israel

[52] Pesik. ולקחתם, p. 185a.
[53] Ex. 15, 1.
[54] Mek. בשלח (ויהי), chap. 6.
[55] Ex. 17, 8.

ceases to trust in God, and becomes unaware of His presence, he forfeits the protection of his Father, and falls a prey to the attacks of the enemy.[56]

And, finally, there is the Pictorial Text. In this text, the thought seems to revolve around some graphic word or phrase, which it is the aim of the preacher to trace in vivid colors and with impressive effect. The rich imagery of the Bible afforded the early preachers an exceptional opportunity to present religious truth imaginatively, to disclose the beauty and force of simple ideas in the most concrete and picturesque manner. Thus, in the text: "What shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done more unto thee, thou deceitful tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of broom,"[57] the lying and slanderous tongue is compared not to the sword but to the arrow, and for a reason, says the preacher, not far to seek. One may hopefully plead for mercy when the sword is aimed at him; he who wields it may change his mind, and return the sword into the sheath. But when an arrow is shot from the bow, the cry of mercy is impotent to deflect it from its course. Similarly, what the tongue has uttered cannot be recalled; the harm it is sure to work cannot be averted.[58] Thus, too, in the text: "A good name is better than precious oil,"[59] the aptness of the figure can be easily demonstrated. All other extracts, like wine and honey, when diluted with much water lose their characteristic qualities, become submerged and cease to be. Oil alone refuses to blend and be absorbed. When mixed with other liquids, it rises to the top and proudly retains its identity. And so, too, a good name lifts a man to great merit and distinctiveness.[60] Again, in the text: "Thou didst pluck up a vine out of Egypt; Thou didst drive out the nations, and didst

[56] Ex. r. 26, 2. [57] Ps. 120, 3–4. [58] שו"ט, 120, 4.
[59] Eccl. 7, 1. [60] Tanḥ. ויקהל, 1.

plant it,"[61] the likeness of Israel to the vine is as just as it is striking. The fruit of the vine must be crushed under foot before it is fit to stand on the table of the king: despised and trampled upon at the moment, Israel is destined to rise to a place of preeminence among the nations of the earth. Again, the vine, though instinct with life, gets the support of the lifeless rods against which it leans: Israel, full of vitality, yet receives his staying-power from his dead forebears.[62]

These different types of texts, together with their standard uses, formed the core of synagogal homilies, and stamped the early preachers as expounders of scriptural truth. The ideas they stressed were those that seemed to spring from the text. Even when they injected into it their own views and opinions, they strove to create, by methods at times extremely artificial, an apparent harmony between the spirit of the text and the aim of the interpreter. With the completion of this part of the task, the effort at exposition shifted from the chosen text to the thought deduced from it, or superimposed upon it. Not that the homilist surrendered the role of scriptural interpreter when the main text had yielded the ideas sought; biblical citations never ceased to flow from his well-stocked memory. But the numerous verses in their intended connotation that followed the thought-adjustment of the text proper, partook of the nature of illustrations. For to the early preachers, grounded in the principle of Revelation, the strongest and purest light that could fall on any religious theme was one that streamed forth from the Bible itself. Therefore, when they entered upon the work of elucidation, which came to be regarded as the most effective part of the preacher's task, they naturally turned to the Scriptures for illustrative material. From the laws and precepts of the Torah, from the prophet's plea and wisdom's counsel, from the age-

[61] Ps. 80, 9. [62] Lev. r. 36, 2.

old experiences of Israel as rehearsed in the Bible, they gathered most of their proofs and examples and poetic images. Yet, while the Bible, their chief source of material as well as of inspiration, gave rise to some of their most impressive illustrations, the consummate art with which they bathed in light and color the drabbest of subjects, they learned in the school of life, by their own efforts, and from their own fruitful experiences. Natural inventiveness and keenness of observation, coupled with the gift of poetic expression, made them masters in the field of elucidation, even as the reverent and steady contemplation of the scriptural text gave them the insight and penetration of the native interpreter.

The illustrations of the early preachers, excepting those derived from the Scriptures, were taken from the common experiences of life. At times, the preacher described actual occurrences, drew familiar pictures of popular ways and habits; more often, he related incidents of current report, recited legendary stories woven around the great characters and events of the past, and conjured up imaginary characters and situations of unusual interest and meaning. In all instances, however, whether drawn from observation, from folk-lore, or from individual fancy, the illustrations were made of the very stuff of life, and could not but appeal to the intelligence of the average man.

These illustrations, while quite numerous and of considerable diversity, may yet be classified with ease and certainty. In the homilies of the early preachers, we shall find seven different species of illustrative matter: 1. The example; 2. The analogy; 3. The proverb; 4. The parable; 5. The allegory; 6. The fable; 7. The legend. Of all illustrations, the example is perhaps the most luminous and effective, since the relation between the thought and the associated object is

so real and deep. The earliest preachers, therefore, aware of the great force inherent in the apt example, made frequent use of this well-known method of elucidation. Thus, one preacher, in his homily on the verse: "Yet thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob, neither hast thou wearied thyself about Me, O Israel,"[63] produces a parallel from daily life, which brings the thought of the prophet very close to one's personal experience. A man, he says, will stand all day idly waiting and not feel weary, but no sooner is he invited to join in a service of worship than fatigue overcomes him and he feels constrained to decline the invitation.[64] Another preacher, in a homily on the verse: "The wicked walk on every side, when vileness is exalted among the sons of men,"[65] draws a picture of the vile treatment of the Jew in the days of Roman persecution, when many had to risk their lives to observe the Law. We ask of one Jew: "Why art thou led to be stoned?" and he answers: "Because I have initiated my son into the Abrahamitic covenant." Another one is asked why he is led to be burned at the stake, and the answer is given forthwith, because he insisted on keeping the Sabbath. A third is executed because he observed the Passover. A fourth is given a hundred lashes because he erected a Booth, or laid the phylacteries, or wore the fringes, yea, because he strove to do the will of the Father in heaven.[66]

Different from the example, though not dissimilar to it, is the analogy, by means of which the preacher seeks to make clear the relation between ideas, bringing a remote principle near by identifying it with one that is familiar to all. One preacher, for instance, asserts that the prophets were endowed by God with prophetic vision only for the good of Israel: the fence is for the protection of the garden; the

[63] Isa. 43, 22. [64] Lam. r. peth. 10.
[65] Ps. 12, 9. [66] Lev. r. 33, 1.

shepherd, for the care of the flock.[67] Another preacher, bemoaning the common practice among creditors to exact high rates of interest from the hard-pressed debtor, turns to the ways of nature for his indictment of the ways of man. The earth, he says, borrows from the sky, and the sky from the earth; the day borrows from the night, and the night from the day; the moon borrows from the stars, and the stars from the moon. In all of God's creation, one creature borrows from the other, and nature's harmony remains unbroken. Man alone borrows from his brother, only to be oppressed and despoiled in the process.[68] Again, to reconcile the belief in God's omnipresence with the biblical declaration that "the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle,"[68a] a well-known preacher invites us to contemplate a deep cave by the seashore. The stormy waves of the sea fill the cave to overflowing, yet the great body of water remains practically undiminished.[69]

Then, too, there is the proverb, which the early preachers used extensively, as analogies. From the experience of the race as epitomized in its proverbs, they sought to obtain additional light for the truth of their statements. The contention, for example, that it is better for a man to give to charity from his own honest earnings than to exploit and rob others that he might thus multiply his philanthropies, is enforced with the proverbial saying concerning the prostitute who sells her body for a basket of apples and distributes its contents among the sick.[70] Or, the reason why Moses delegated to others the task of waging war against Midian, although he himself had received God's command: "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites,"[71] was that he felt obligated to the inhabitants of Midian for the many favors they had shown

[67] Mek. נזר, chap. 1. [68] Ex. r. 31, 15. [68a] Ex. 40, 34.
[69] Pesik. r. chap. 5. [70] Lev. r. 3, 1. [71] Num. 31, 1.

him in the early days of his career, and therefore deemed it improper to direct in person the assault on his former benefactors. The proverb speaks truly: "Cast no stones into the well from which thou hast drunk."[72] Again, astrology with its supposed power to read man's fate in the position of the stars, may be useful to pagan nations; Israel, with his reliance on God and His law, is independent of the stars, and need not dread their signs. One whose feet are well-shod may trample on thorns with impunity, is a very apt proverb.[73]

Another species of illustration, of which the early preachers made abundant use, is the parable. Though very much akin to the analogy, being in essence nothing more than an extended simile, it stands out as a distinct literary form, with a pattern and atmosphere peculiarly its own. As developed by the early masters, it is the product of a sustained artistic effort, in which observation and invention play the dominant role. The preacher strives to create an imaginary but not impossible situation, in the light of which his text and theme assume fresh meaning and lustre. Some of these parables, especially those that serve to illumine a given word in the text, are very simple, brief, and incisive. Thus, for example, in commenting on the divine command to Abraham: "Walk before Me, and be thou whole-hearted,"[74] the preacher compares Abraham to the friend of a king, who, seeing his master wind his way through a dark passage in the black of night, places a lighted candle on his own window-sill. The king notes the devotion of his friend, but says unto him: "Wherefore dost thou shed light upon me from thy window? Come out with thy candle, and walk before me." Thus, too, spoke God to Abraham: "Wherefore dost thou light My way in Mesopotamia and its environs? Come forth and carry thy

[72] Tanḥ. מטות, sec. 3. [73] Gen. r. 44, 12.
[74] Gen. 17, 1.

bright light before Me all through the land of Israel."[75]

However, when the general theme of the homily is illustrated by the parable, it is usually more elaborate and extensive. Thus, in a homily on the outstanding merits of Abraham, in which the verse: "And he shall be like a tree planted by streams of water,"[76] is applied to the patriarch, the preacher proceeds to indicate the accuracy of the comparison, with the aid of a parable. It is like unto a man who went forth on a journey, and soon found himself in a desert with no water to slake his thirst, and no spot where to hide from the scorching sun. As he journeyed on, he suddenly descried a large tree, rich in foliage and weighted down with fruit, that stood beside a bubbling spring. He hastened to it and took shelter under its protecting boughs. He drank of the water of the well and ate of the fruit of the tree, and felt strong again. When he had rested sufficiently, and was about to resume his journey, he addressed himself to the tree in the following manner: "O tree, wherewith shall I bless thee? Shall I bless thee with abundance of water, with luscious fruit, with luxuriant foliage? Why, these blessings are thine already. There is but one blessing I may fittingly pronounce upon thee: 'May thy seed, when replanted, be like thee'". Even so did God speak unto Abraham, whom He had found faithful after so many generations of infidelity.[77]

Again, in an impressive homily on spiritual preparedness, in which the verse: "Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no oil,"[78] is interpreted to mean that one's life should always be kept spotless, and one's record of good deeds always full and complete, in constant readiness to answer the summons from on high, the preacher embodies his message in a telling parable. A king once invited his

[75] Gen. r. 30, 9. [76] Ps. 1, 3.
[77] Tana d. Eliya. chap. 3, 25. [78] Eccl.9, 8.

people to a banquet. In extending the invitation, he made it clear that they were to appear in the palace for the occasion clean of body and of dress, but failed to specify the hour when the feast would take place. Some of the invited guests, aware of the great abundance in the king's pantry, tarried before the palace gate, in expectation of a speedy call to the feast. A great many others, however, impressed with the fact that it takes much time and careful planning to get up so large a banquet, went about their accustomed tasks; the plasterer, the potter, the blacksmith, the laundry worker, they all continued to ply their trades, with apparent unconcern. But suddenly the announcement went forth that the banquet-hall was ready to receive its guests and that the king would brook no delay. Forthwith, all work ceased, and the guests, streaming from all directions, began to throng the hall. When the king surveyed the motley crowd and perceived that while some were properly attired others wore the soiled clothes in which they did their daily work, he was exceedingly angry. He arose and spoke to the assembled in the following words: "The feast I have made is intended only for those who have prepared themselves for it. These shall take their seats around the banquet-table, and partake of the king's food. All the others, who have disgraced the palace of the king, shall stand aside, watching the feast as it goes on, but taking no part in it."[79]

An illustrative figure not as conspicuous in the early homilies as the parable, but quite as impressive and effective, is the allegory. While the parable is an extended simile, the allegory is an extended metaphor. An abstract truth is conceived under the form of a person or any object of sense, and is thus given concreteness and dramatic intensity. Thus, to present, with utmost vividness, the thought that what consti-

[79] Eccl. r. 9, 8.

tutes the superiority of one nation over another is the degree of its productivity and usefulness, one of the preachers frames the following allegory. Once upon a time, the straw, the stubble, and the chaff engaged in a heated controversy. Each, in turn, contended that the field had been tilled and sown for no other purpose than to bring it into being. To compose the dispute, the wheat counseled the contenders to wait patiently for the harvesting season; for, then, said the wheat, we shall see whose claim is the most valid. When harvest-time came, the owner of the field gathered his sheaves and made ready for the winnowing process. The chaff, of course, was carried away by the wind; the straw, the owner easily disposed of by casting it to the ground; while the stubble he consigned to the flames. But he gathered the wheat and made it into a heap, to be cherished by all men.[80] Another preacher, in a homily on the text: "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity; yea, he conceiveth mischief, and bringeth forth falsehood,"[81] casts his lesson into the mould of an allegorical narrative. When, in accordance with divine instruction, Noah began to assemble into pairs the various species of the animal kingdom, to be taken into the ark, Falsehood presented himself for admission. "But I cannot admit you," said Noah, "unless you find for yourself a mate." Accordingly, Falsehood set out in search of a mate. It was not long before he came upon Curse, to whom he related his troubles, and of whom, at the same time, he inquired as to whether he would not consent to be his mate for the duration of his stay in the ark. Curse wished to accommodate him, but demanded a suitable reward for the service. Whereupon Falsehood promised that, in compensation for the service he was about to render, all future accumulations would go to him. Thus, properly paired, they appeared before Noah and gained admittance into the ark. In

[80] Gen. r. 83, 5. [81] Ps. 7, 15.

the course of time, when the water had subsided, and they found themselves on dry land again, Falsehood began to gather stores of all kinds, which, in turn, Curse appropriated for his own use. Whatever Falsehood accumulated, Curse forthwith consumed. At first, Falsehood vigorously protested against this wholesale spoliation, but Curse turned a deaf ear to his complaints. "Were not these the terms we agreed upon?" Curse would ask. To this question, Falsehood could make but one reply; and so, he had to submit to the heartless depredations of Curse.[82]

A modified form of the allegorical figure, is the fable. Like the allegory, it seeks to impress upon the mind a simple moral truth through the personification of ideas and qualities, but, unlike the allegory, its choice of characters, so to speak, is restricted, at least in modern usage, to animals. The number of fables in the early homilies, while not large, is sufficient to indicate the prevalence of their use and the popularity of their appeal. As illustrations of practical wisdom they fulfil their function admirably, and still possess much interest and charm. To cite an example or two, a celebrated teacher, who sought to allay popular indignation, when the Romans, in the reign of Trajan, withdrew permission to rebuild the Temple, told his listeners the following fable. It once happened that a lion, as he was devouring his prey, discovered that a bone had lodged in his throat. To obtain speedy relief, the lion proclaimed that he would pay a generous reward to anyone who would remove the obstruction. Whereupon a heron came, and, reaching with his long beak into the throat of the lion, dislodged the bone. The operation over, the heron asked to be given the promised reward. The lion turned to the heron and said: "Now you can go forth and plume yourself on the fact that you had entered

[82] שו"ט, 7, 11.

the mouth of a lion, and came out unscathed." And so, too, when dealing with Romans, one should be grateful for injuries escaped, and not bemoan privileges denied or withdrawn.[83] Again, in commenting on the verse: "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he go back as he came, and shall take nothing for his labor, which he may carry away in his hand,"[84] one preacher relates the following fable. A fox once came upon a vineyard that was enclosed with a high fence, and seemed to offer no other entrance besides a narrow hole. The fox attempted to shove his body through this opening but to no avail. And so, he went without food for three days, and then, weak and emaciated, succeeded in passing through the hole, thus making his way into the vineyard. In a short time, while enjoying the delicious fruit all about him, he regained his strength and weight, and felt ready to leave and roam elsewhere. But, to his great dismay, he discovered that it was as difficult a task to make his exit through that hole as he had found it when he wished to enter. So he abstained again from all food for three days, until the bulk of his body fitted the size of the hole. When he had emerged on the other side of the fence, thin and weak, he turned his face toward the vineyard and spoke the following words: "Vineyard, O vineyard! How beautiful thou art, and how luscious the fruit thou bringest forth! Yet of what benefit art thou, when one must leave thee in the same condition he was when he entered thee?"[85]

And, finally, there is the legend, which the early preachers in some instances created, in others adapted, and most often perhaps only reproduced. Of these legends, whatever their origin be, we have in the main two classes: those that spring from the scriptural text, or its context, and are vitally related to it, and those that have no inherent or direct connection

[83] Gen. r. 64, 10. [84] Eccl. 5, 14. [85] Eccl. r. 5, 14.

with the text, though through the adaptations effected by the preacher they become linked with the text and clearly illustrative of his thought. Thus, to cite an example of the former group, in a homily on the text: "Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian,"[86] the preacher, in his desire to discover some logical connection between the account of Moses as shepherd of Jethro's flock and the vision of the burning bush that immediately follows it, posits the thought that God tests a man's fitness for responsible leadership by the qualities of character he manifests in the pursuit of his vocation. Moses came upon the burning bush and received the mandate to lead his people, because in his work as shepherd he demonstrated his remarkable capacity for leadership. One day, as Moses was tending the sheep, he saw a young lamb break away from the flock and make for the wilderness. Fearing it might get lost, he hastened after it and sought to overtake it. Suddenly, the little lamb stopped alongside a pool of water, and began to drink from it with great avidity. Moses slowly approached it and said: "I knew not it was the pang of thirst that had driven thee hither. How faint with fatigue thou art!" Having thus spoken, he tenderly lifted the poor creature to his shoulders, and carried it back to the flock. It was then that God said unto Moses: "Thou hast shown much tenderness unto the flock in thy care; thou art, therefore, destined to be the leader of Israel, My flock."[87]

Again, as example of the latter group of legends, that is, of those which do not naturally flow from the text and are bound up with it only by special accommodation, though in all instances they throw much light upon it, we may consider the series of homilies woven around the verse: "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart;

[86] Ex. 3, 1. [87] Ex. r. 2, 2.

for God hath already accepted thy work."[88] A number of activities are suggested, which would merit the reassuring pronouncement: "For God hath already accepted thy work." One homilist would give first place to school and synagogue attendance, and make of the verse a heavenly benediction resounding from on High at the moment when children finished their lessons at school and worshippers ended their prayers in the synagogue. Another homilist chooses a noble, heroic, and humane act as the work most worthy of God's speedy acceptance. To this thought of his, he gives expression in the following legend. One Friday afternoon, a very pious man by the name of Abba Taḥna, was plodding his weary way homeward, with a heavy pack on his back, when the prostrate form of a leper caused him to pause. "I entreat thee," the helpless invalid pleaded, "to deal kindly with me, and carry me into town." The pious man was sorely grieved and perplexed. His back could stand no larger load than was already his. To leave the pack where the leper lay, might result, if carried off by some one, in the loss of the sole source of support for himself and family. Yet not to heed the pitiful cry of the afflicted would taint his soul with ineffaceable guilt. As he stood there puzzled and bewildered, he was seized by a sudden impulse. He unloosed his pack, and hurled it to the ground. He then raised the unfortunate leper, placed him astride his back, and trudged away toward the town. When he had seen the leper home, he returned for his pack, only to reenter the town, with a load of merchandise on his back, after the sun had set. His townsmen had already ushered in the Sabbath, and some of them stood gazing at the passing figure, and, with a shrug of the shoulders, murmured to themselves: "So this is Abba Taḥna, who is famed for his piety!" In fact, Abba Taḥna himself was greatly distressed

[88] Eccl. 9, 7.

over his open violation of the Sabbath rest. Suddenly, to his great amazement, the sun began to shine again. This distressed Abba Taḥna still more. A miracle like this, he thought, face-saving as it is, could bode nothing but ill. It might mean the bartering away of a spiritual good for material gain. Whereupon a heavenly voice arose: "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God hath already accepted thy work."[89]

By these methods, the early preachers sought to penetrate the inner meaning of the text, and thus deepen the thought and spirit of the Bible. By these methods, they brought instruction, edification, and comfort to their people. By these methods, too, they preserved Judaism as a "tree of life," an ever-growing, ever-expanding faith, a faith which, though deeply rooted in the past, spreads its sturdy branches over the living present, still affording shelter and rest to the "tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast."

Generally, the early preachers concluded their homilies with words of comfort and hope. At times, they adverted to the glories of the messianic age, when oppression and sorrow would no longer plague their people. Occasionally, they mused on the happier state in the world to come, when the spirit, freed from the shackles of the body, would engage in higher activities and rejoice in pleasures divine. Not infrequently, they would invoke God's blessing on Zion, and reiterate their faith in its speedy redemption. In all these,they sought to emulate the prophets of old, who used to close their message in a hopeful, inspiriting strain, despite the severity of their indictment of the people's conduct.[90]

[89] Eccl. r. 9, 7.
[90] Pesik. ירמיהו, p. 116a.

3

The Jewish sermon, sprung from synagogal worship and closely bound up with the scriptural lesson, could not but rest on an exegetical framework. The quest after the deeper meaning of the text, the initial concern and chief distinction of the preacher, made the minute examination of every word and phrase imperative. To preach meant perforce to interpret. Yet, the prevalent notion that in early synagogal preaching homiletical exegesis constituted the entire purpose and essence of the Jewish sermon, needs radical revision. To be sure, scriptural interpretation formed the indispensable substructure of every sermon preached in the synagogue; but the appeal to personal experience and the application of the lesson to individual conduct taxed the powers, and determined the effectiveness, of the earliest preachers. The exegesis of the homilist always marked the beginning, never the end, the technical approach, never the ultimate objective, of the sermon. If in the homilies of the early preachers, as preserved in the various midrashic collections, one often discerns little more than a closely woven textual fabric, it may well be that in the eyes of the respective redactors the luminous interpretations, rather than the telling applications, merited the study and reverence of posterity. Indeed, mere exegetical comments on the lesson of the week, embellished now and then with apt story and parable, would hardly have proved adequate to stir the popular imagination. The fondness of the masses for preaching[91] testifies to the fascination and power of the preacher's message. And it may also be safely surmised that the woman, who, while listening to a lengthy sermon, grew totally oblivious of her household duties, only to encounter, upon returning home

[91] Sifré, האזינו, 57a, Venice ed.; Pesik. 101b; B.B. 145a; Sot. 40a.

late, the explosive outburst of an irate husband,[92] had been detained and absorbed by something more enthralling than ingenious exegesis. In fact, the Jewish sermon has always derived its interest and vitality not so much from its homiletical framework as from the profundity of its spiritual message.

The early preachers, who accepted the Bible as the sole guide in human conduct, endeavored to find in biblical statement, expressed or implied, everything that would meet the various needs and conditions of life. Positing the conviction that no words in the Bible were superfluous, that every apparently superfluous letter would upon further cultivation yield a most fruitful meaning, they sought so to interpret the letter as to give fullest expression to their own thoughts and aspirations. Though imprisoned, as it were, within the Bastille of the Book, they did not suffer their own rich endowment of heart and mind to languish for want of expression. They peopled the very space that narrowly encircled them with romantic dreams of an exalted past and glowing visions of a glorious future. While the poetic genius of other ancient peoples lavished its exuberant powers upon the gods and goddesses of an extravagant mythology, the early preachers of the Synagogue, the creative interpreters of the Book, rehearsed the wondrous manifestations of God's glory and power, created a legendary setting for the past in which Israel's heroes shone in all their greatness of soul, and drew a word-picture of the nature and glory of the righteous life which, for completeness of conception and nobility of aim, has hardly a parallel in the world's literature.

The supreme importance of the homilies of the early preachers has been so clearly recognized that students of Jewish theology and ethics have utilized the Midrashim, in

[92] Lev. r. 9, 9.

which these homilies are preserved, in whatever fragmentary a form, as primary sources, not inferior to the Bible itself. In fact, for the Jew, with whom Judaism neither began nor ended with the Bible, the decisive factor in faith and conduct is not the biblical mandate but the meaning given to it by the masters of his tradition, among which these homilists rank high. Hence, the religion of the Jew as lived by the Jew may best be learned from the works of the creative interpreters of the Bible. It is in their teachings, in the motives that guided their thought, in the purposes that influenced their doctrines, that we shall discover the true character and spirit of Judaism.

It is not our intention to essay here even the briefest presentation of the religious views and doctrines of these popular teachers. Their exposition of Judaism, continued through many centuries within the precincts of the synagogue, comprehends the whole of man in relation to the whole of life. To reproduce such a vast system of ideas, with fidelity and fulness of detail, would require much more space, and considerably more extensive resources, than afforded us. Besides, authoritative works on Jewish theology and ethics, while not numerous, have been produced from time to time, by men of great erudition and insight.[93] Our chief aim, in the following sketch, will be to trace the main stream of the thought of these early expounders, as it flows uninterruptedly through the countless homilies preserved for us.

There are, in the main, three central themes around which the wisdom, the poetry, and the admonition of the early preachers revolve. The majesty of God, the grandeur of the Torah, the unique destiny of Israel,—these fundamental

[93] The most notable of these works in English are: *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, S. Schechter, Macmillan, 1909; *Jewish Theology*, K. Kohler, Macmillan, 1918; *Judaism*, G. F. Moore, Harvard University Press, 1927.

conceptions of Jewish belief occur and recur in their homilies with impressive frequency, and serve to invest with harmony and beauty the fragmentary products of their thought. God, the Torah, and Israel, which, according to the mystic notion of a medieval Kabbalist, merge into an indissoluble unity,[94] form the fountainhead of their deepest thoughts and feelings, and may well be chosen to designate the principal parts of our brief discussion, respectively.

At the outset, it may be well to observe that with the early preachers, steeped in scriptural lore as they were, the belief in the existence of God rested not on the inconclusive evidences of our reason, but on the deep certainties of revealed truth. At times, especially when coping with the persistent doubts of blatant agnostics, they endeavored to supplement their deep-rooted faith with rational proofs, among which the argument from design was perhaps the most common.[95] But this kind of reasoning, meant to buttress a tottering faith, played no part in the formation of their own convictions, and aided them but little in the effort to promote religious knowledge among the people. To them, and no less to the bulk of the people, God was the sole Creator of the Universe.[96] Having fashioned it, He lives in all that is; His spirit per-

[94] The apophthegm: קודשא בריך הוא ואורייתא וישראל חד אינון, "The Holy One, praised be He, the Torah, and Israel are one," is rightly ascribed to the Zohar, since the thought, if not the precise words, had its origin in that work. Thus, in one place, the author of the Zohar observes: ואין תורה אלא קודשא בריך הוא "The Torah is none other than the Holy One, praised be He" (Zohar, בשלח, p. 60a, Lublin, 1882; יתרו, p. 90b; משפטים, p. 24a). Elsewhere, in animadverting upon the great merit of Israel, he says: דהו ושמיא אחידן בהוא ואינון ושמיא חד הוא "For He and His Name are One; and they (Israel) and His Name are One" (יתרו, 87a). It was only natural that later writers should telescope the two statements into one quotation (לקוטי אמרים, chap. 23, p. 28, Wilna, 1912; כתר שם טוב, pt. 2, p. 3).

[95] בה"מ, מדרש תמורה, p. 113; Mek. יתרו, chap. 6.

[96] Tanḥ. Buber, Gen. 12.

meates the works of His hands. The world is all astir with the pulsating life of its Creator; there is no place, however humble, that is devoid of the Divine Presence.[97] To be sure, His power transcends the world He has made, yet His image is engraved upon it as if upon a tablet.[98] The manifestations of His presence may vary, but His essence is one, and the same in all things.[99] In the light that illumines the earth, in the blowing breeze and floating cloud, in every bead of dew and every blade of grass, even as in all the forces that operate within the soul of man, we see but one divine spirit in perpetual diffusion, animating all, yet transcending and controlling all.[100]

But God is more than the architect and indwelling spirit of the universe. Essentially, God is a moral personality, the quintessence of ethical perfection. When we think of God, we have in mind absolute qualities of character, supreme ways of goodness, of truth, and of loving-kindness.[101] It is He who renews our strength from day to day, restoring unto us the vitality depleted in our daily tasks.[102] It is He who labors every hour of the day to provide all men, be they upright or wicked, pious or pagan, with their needed sustenance.[103] It is He who repeatedly espouses the cause of the lowly and the dispirited.[104] Hence, to imitate God must mean, in the first instance, to emulate His creative activity, to become co-partner with Him in the work of creation: to plant, to build, to rehabilitate.[105] For the things God has formed, man himself not excluded, while potentially capable of fullest perfection, lack completeness in their present state, and must needs be improved, a task obviously reserved for human en-

[97] Mek. Bo, chap. 1; Pesik. p. 2b. [98] Ex. r. 15, 22.
[99] Mek. Besh. Shir. chap. 4. [100] Gen. r. 3, 4; Lev. r. 28, 1; 4, 8.
[101] Tanḥ. וישלח, 10. [102] שו״ט, 25, 2. [103] Mek. יתרו, עמלק, chap. 2.
[104] Tanḥ. Buber, Vayer. 3. [105] Lev. r. 25, 3-4.

terprise.[106] Besides, the work a man does with his own hands is the prime channel of divine mercy: man works, and God blesses his efforts.[107] But this aspect of the imitation of God, important and significant as it is, rises no higher than the primary notion of God as Creator. It is only when we have learned to follow the ways of God as qualities of character and conduct, moulding our lives after the pattern of His divine attributes, that we rise to the highest vision of God, and become worthy bearers of His name.[108] We become righteous men, truly God-like, when we nourish and sustain His creatures.[109] We ascend unto the very presence of God, and cause His spirit to dwell among men, when perfect humility controls our conduct.[110] Conversely, we spurn the belief in God's existence, when we lose faith in acts of loving-kindness; and we defile the earth, making it an unfit abode for the divine presence, when we allow arrogance and pride to dominate our hearts.[111]

As God is the source and ultimate goal of humanity, so is the Torah, which embodies the full expression of His will, the holy bond of our union with the divine. In it is charted the complete course of life's conduct; to accept its guidance, and follow faithfully the directions given, is to insure our safe arrival at the destination appointed for us. Now, this revealed truth, it is worthy of note, is the property of all men; it was cradled in the desert that none might claim exclusive ownership of it.[112] In fact, the Ten Commandments, when first promulgated, were couched in as many languages as there were then nations who spoke them.[113] Israel, the

[106] Gen. r. 11, 6. [107] Tanḥ. ויצא, 13.
[108] Sifré, עקב, 49. [109] Tanḥ. נח, 5.
[110] Mek. יתרו, Baḥo. chap. 9.
[111] Kohel. r. 7, 1; Mek. יתרו, Baḥo. chap. 9.
[112] Mek. יתרו, Baḥod, chap. 1. [113] Tanḥ. שמות, 25.

original recipient of the Torah, has been its custodian, holding it in trust for all the nations of the earth.[114] No one is disqualified to join the ranks of the righteous; in the realm of piety, there is no hereditary aristocracy.[115] The devotee of paganism who chooses to adhere to the teachings of the Torah, is truly as worthy as the High Priest.[116] Hence, all men, be they strangers or natives, are equal before its laws; the injunction: "Ye shall have one statute, both for the stranger, and for him that is born in the land,"[117] while issued in connection with the proper observance of a specific institution, really proclaims a general principle, as pertinent elsewhere in the Torah as here.[118] And even as its laws embrace all men, so do they encircle the whole of life. To be sure, the Torah in its essence is of but small compass and singularly simple. Whether we choose to find its core in the express command: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,"[119] or in the principle implicit in the statement: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him,"[120] in either case it is a simple, pithy saying that lies at the heart of all the laws and institutions of the Torah.[121] In fact, the gist of its message to men, despite the elaborateness of its design, is simply this: Take upon you the yoke of the heavenly kingdom, appraise each other's worth in a reverential spirit, and deal kindly with one another.[122] Yet, these simple objectives, so easy to state, are very hard to attain. The Ten Commandments, few and weighty as they are, require numerous statutes and ordinances to make them effectual; the royal carriage, when passing through the city streets, must be accompanied by an

[114] *Ibid.* דברים, 3. [115] Ex. r. 19, 4; Num. r. 8, 2.
[116] Sifra, אחרי מות, chap. 13. [117] Num. 9, 14.
[118] Sifré, בהעלותך, 71. [119] Lev. 19, 10. [120] Gen. 5, 1.
[121] Sifra, קדושים, chap. 4; Gen. r. 24, 7. [122] Sifré, האזינו, 323.

advance and a rear guard, if its safety is to be assured.[123] Besides, man's task in life is as difficult as his nature is peculiar. For, of all creatures, man alone is composed of earthly and heavenly ingredients; and it is the function of the Torah to transfigure the earthly elements to the likeness of the heavenly, that is, to spiritualize his whole nature.[124] Such a result cannot be achieved suddenly and by sporadic means; it must come, if come at all, through a long process of self-discipline. Hence the numerous ritual laws, which serve the purpose of disciplining man, so as to refine his nature.[125]

The Torah, then, with its ethical mandates, its legal enactments, and ritual provisions, aims to make man God-like by implanting in his soul the perpetual consciousness of God's presence. God is eager to occupy the heart of man; He will make His way into it, if He but find an opening no larger than the eye of a needle.[126] This opening, so to speak, the Torah seeks to effect. It proposes to employ, in the main, two powerful instruments or principles, one of which is to be forged out of the very nature of man, while the other is to be formed of the crude material of his bodily existence; in other words, it means to accomplish its purpose through the exaltation of man and the sublimation of his physical functions. It begins, therefore, with the assertion of the divine nature of man. He was moulded in God's image. Angels lead the way, as man goes forth on the highway; they herald his approach, saying: "Make room for the image of God!"[127] His soul is infinitely precious, surpassing in worth all of God's creation.[128] In fact, the beauties and bounties of nature have come into existence only that they might minister to the well-being of man.[129] This exalted view of the human personality, which

[123] Pesik. Baḥod. p. 103a. [124] Sifré, האזינו, 306. [125] Gen. r. 44, 1.
[126] Pesik. החודש, p. 46b. [127] שו"ט, 17, 8.
[128] Mek. יתרו, Baḥod. chap. 4. [129] Gen. r. 13, 2; Tana d. Eliya. chap. 1.

leavens all the ethical teachings of the Torah, once lodged securely in the consciousness of man, will transform his inner life, making it a fit abode for the Divine Presence. Again, through the sanctification of the physical details of life, the Torah aims to raise the material existence of man to a higher plane, so that the chief obstacle to his clear vision of God may be overcome. The natural desires and passions of man are in themselves good, not evil; the factors that go into the making of our civilization spring from these very forces.[130] Surely, the body, which houses the soul of man, is worthy of the most meticulous care we can give to it.[131] It is not the enjoyment of the physical that is in any way degrading, but the failure to see any meaning and purpose beyond it. What is truly deadening in the life of the wicked is, that he sees the light of the sun without turning his thought to the Creator of light, that he eats and drinks without expressing his gratitude to the Source of all our comforts; on the other hand, what invests with significance the life of the pious is, that when he indulges in the delights of the senses he lifts his grateful heart unto Him from whom all things come.[132] In providing that some "religious duty," whether of an ethical or purely ritual character, shall be associated with everything we do and experience, the Torah makes it possible for us to breathe the spirit of religion into the whole of life, that we may thus become worthy heirs of the life eternal.[133]

The chief merit of Israel lies in the fact that he has accepted the Torah with its life-encompassing discipline, accepted the responsibility entailed in the guardianship of God's law, and, as a people, has proved steady and persistent in the performance of his task. Like all other nations, Israel began his career as a tribal group, but when he assumed the

[130] Gen. r. 9, 7. [131] Lev. r. 34, 3.
[132] Tanḥ. ברכה, sec. 7. [133] Num. r. 17, 5.

role of custodian of Torah, he ceased to function as an ethnic unit and became a religious people consecrated to the service of God.[134] This transformation in Israel's character really began, as a process, with his redemption from Egypt; for he was set free from human servitude for no other purpose than that he might be free to enter a higher, a more exacting, service.[135] Then, when at the Red Sea he proclaimed the sovereignty of God, and when later, at the foot of Sinai, he pledged himself to keep and preserve the truth divinely revealed to him, he became a unique nation, a nation that found in the Torah the consummation of its nationhood.[136] Thus, while God chose Israel for the accomplishment of His larger purpose in the world, it was Israel who really chose God for his portion.[137] And since then, Israel has justified the ways of God to men; he has repeatedly surrendered his life to the hang-man, but would not betray his trust.[138] Despite the oppressive burdens put upon him by cruel governments, he still stands erect with a heart ever fixed upon his heavenly Father.[139] He has been trampled upon by the nations of the earth, but he is destined to survive them all.[140] For his is a service that is indispensable to the life of the race: the world may learn to get along without its high-priced condiments, but never will it be able to dispense with the wheat of the field, the very staff of life.[141]

These three currents, then, God, the Torah, Israel, course freely through the homiletical stream of the early preachers, carrying as they flow a cargo of ideas and sentiments of great bulk and extraordinary quality. It would be difficult to mention any theological aspect, or ethical duty, or point of prac-

[134] Pesik. בחודש, p. 108b. [135] Sifré, שלח, sec. 115.
[136] Pesik. שקלים, 17a; כלת משה, p. 2a. [137] Sifré, האזינו, sec. 312.
[138] Ex. r. 42, 9. [139] Lev. r. 23, 5.
[140] Gen. r. 41, 9. [141] Pesik. r. תשא, chap. 10.

tical conduct, that escaped the attention of these popular teachers. Rooted in the conviction that religion was co-extensive with life, that no clear line of demarcation could be drawn between the secular and the sacred, that the whole of life was one continuous sacrament, they sought to include in their instruction and admonition all the phases and difficulties of our human experience. The notion of the integrity and sanctity of life so widened the scope, and enhanced the gravity, of their preaching, that they could give to the most transparent demonstration of reason, the most insignificant detail of individual obligation, the most ordinary rule of etiquette, the same solemn seriousness with which they discussed the baffling mysteries of faith or the far-reaching implications of our social responsibilities. Even in the realm of motive, while never failing to discriminate between the high and the low, they frequently appealed to the crudest of prudential considerations, as they did more often to the highest sense of religious duty, thus utilizing the whole of man to rebuild the whole of life. It is precisely this amazing comprehensiveness of their thought that imparts to their homilies the interest and freshness of real life, universal in appeal and perennial in influence.

4

As already intimated, of the early and most creative period in Jewish preaching we possess only fragments, bare notes, mere skeletons of sermons, voluminous in extent, rich in content, but withal incomplete in themselves, and therefore inadequate for a more definite characterization of the sermon's growth and unfoldment. From the very abundance of the material at our disposal, we may safely infer that preachers were numerous and sermons very popular.[142] The redactors

[142] In this connection, it is interesting to note that while the first part of

who from time to time collected and edited these homilies could not, in the nature of the case, save more than a fraction of the vast mass. What they have preserved, extensive and varied enough as it is, reveals much as to the methods employed, and the ideas habitually stressed, by the early preachers. Yet the insight thus afforded us is neither full nor profound, since it is gathered not from the finished works of outstanding personalities but from the unfinished products of a heterogeneous group. A mosaic, however attractive, lacks the sharpness and naturalness of the solid figure. We may learn of the state of poetry from an anthology of verse, but to see poetry in the making we must probe the spirit of the individual poet. Unfortunately, however, not until the thirteenth century do we encounter a volume of complete sermons, all the work of a known preacher, and preserved in the original form. It is quite reasonable to suppose that earlier centuries could have boasted of similar individual efforts, but that due perhaps to the imperfect methods of transmission then prevalent, they failed to preserve all that they had produced. Then, again, it may be that with the Revival of Learning in Europe there came also that pride of authorship which impelled the individual author to seek permanency for the results of his labors, an impulse not quite pronounced in previous centuries. But, whatever the case and cause, certain it is that only as we reach the period when the complete sermons of individual preachers become available for our study, are we in a position to form a clear view of the Jewish pulpit, and a just evaluation of the sermon as preached in the Synagogue.

---

the parallelism in the verse: "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Ps. 19, 5), is made by one interpreter to refer to the ubiquitous character of the synagogues and houses of study, the latter part is made by another commentator to denote the widespread influence of the edifying words of the preachers (Tana d. Eliya. chap. 2).

In the following chapters, we shall endeavor to present as thorough an analysis as we could make of the work and aims of some of the outstanding Jewish preachers of the Middle Ages, as reflected in the sermons they preached. We shall let these representative preachers speak for themselves, so to say, that they may enlighten us with respect to the true state of the sermon in the medieval Jewish pulpit, not by telling us about it, but by simply rehearsing their own parts, and thus reproduce for us the setting, the atmosphere, the conflicts, of that stirring drama, in the original enactment of which they numbered among the chief members of the cast.

II.

JACOB ANATOLI

A Thirteenth-Century Liberal

I

IN the Synagogue, to preach meant, first of all, to interpret. In fact, the study of Torah entailed the obligation to fathom the inner meaning of the scriptural text, whether it concerned itself with law and ritual or with ethical and spiritual truth. The aims of the interpreters differed in accordance with the subject-matter probed, but the methods employed remained unchanged. Whether to enjoin and instruct, or to edify and inspire, the sacred Word had to be explored. The legalist and the ethicist, the poet and the philosopher, the practical idealist and the uncompromising visionary, though divided among various chambers, belonged to the same household, the "tent of the Lord" encircling them all, the "fiery law" attracting them all. "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read"[1]—this was the imperious summons that came to unite them in one task and arm them with one common weapon.

Hence, it may truly be said that as regards the materials and methods of preaching, there was no teacher of the Law but who plied the trade of the preacher in the pulpit, and no homilist, however fanciful at times in his flights, but who found firm anchorage within the "four ells of the law." An unimaginative scholar might conceivably master the various applications, but could hardly penetrate into the hidden interpretations, of the fundamental law; an ignorant preacher

[1] Isa. 34,16.

presented a contradiction in terms, as inconceivable as an illiterate literateur. The task of interpretation bred resourcefulness in the learned, promoting mental alertness and quickening the imagination; it also impelled the most popular of preachers to seek a wider knowledge of the sources and a more thorough familiarity with the ideas and principles derived therefrom. Thus, thought and fancy, erudition and ingenuity, stability and waywardness, accompanied the student in the "house of study" and the expounder of the weekly lesson in the "house of prayer."

This identity in the methods of interpretation used by all "disciples of the wise," tended to level the artificial barriers separating the learned scholars from the popular teachers. In most instances, the two enterprises happily merged in one person. The rabbi, or teacher of the law, also served as the expounder of the scriptural lesson. He who devoted himself to juridical and theological studies, and in whom was vested, therefore, the authority to settle legal and religious questions, also sought to cultivate the art of appealing to men's consciences and stirring their imagination. Only some external disqualification or temperamental disharmony in the person of the official teacher necessitated a dichotomy in his functions: reserving to himself the power to render legal decisions while consigning the function of the preacher to one better fitted, though not necessarily better trained, for the task. To be sure, talent and inclination, here as elsewhere, determined the degree of excellence attained, both in the field of learning and in the province of preaching. But the sources from which the erudite teacher drew his knowledge of the Law were not only accessible, but quite indispensable, to the popular interpreter; and the materials out of which the skilled preacher wrought his homilies were closely interwoven with the factual and speculative strands of the scholar.

The rabbinic dictum that while no two biblical verses can be taken to express identical thoughts, every single verse lends itself to a variety of interpretations,[2] made it possible for diverse minds, restricted to the same sources, to weave thought-patterns of striking dissimilarity. The mind of the student, like some strong magnet, drew unto itself from the common mass of materials those elements or particles with which it was in closest affinity. The same biblical statement or phrase which yielded legal sanction to the jurist often also afforded the philosopher an adequate basis for his theory and gave sufficient warrant to the preacher for his solemn admonition. And when, as was not infrequently the case, these varied interests and powers resided in one person, the dividing line between philosophic dissertation, for example, and homiletic exhortation became too tenuous for the most discerning. Thus, a work like the מלמד התלמידים, which will engage our attention in this chapter, is regarded by some as a philosophical treatise, though in form and content as well as in the express intent of the author, it is nothing more than a series of sermons woven around the scriptural lesson of the week and sundry synagogal occasions, many of which, if not perhaps all, had actually been delivered before congregations of Sabbath worshippers.[3]

Yet, since thought and monition characterize most of the literary efforts of our medieval teachers, and since all students of Torah must resort to biblical and rabbinical interpretation for the validation of their views, what distinguishes

[2] Sanh. 34a.

[3] "And when this book (Maimuni's *Guide*) had opened my eyes, I began to devote myself to the deeper understanding of Scripture and other holy writings. Often, at weddings, I gave utterance to my interpretations; but owing to my preoccupation with personal matters, I could not fix them in writing. Having accustomed myself to the practice of speaking, I was soon prevailed upon to give weekly sermons in public until the displeasure of some of my friends caused me to abandon the task" (הקדמה).

the philosopher from the preacher could be determined neither by content nor by method, wholly and exclusively. Other factors must of necessity be considered. What is the main objective of the author? Is it to prove a point or to build a character? Is it to confirm a truth or to refine an instinct? Is the appeal directed to the intellect or to the executive faculty, the will? What conditions the given interpretation? Is it the desire to assert the power of mind or the urge to ascertain the will of God? Then, again, into what framework is the material cast? Does the work partake of the qualities of the disquisition or of the discourse? Are the ideas organized thematically or textually? These and similar aspects, closely viewed, will reveal the precise nature of the composition. And it is because in the totality of their features the discourses in the מלמד התלמידים are seen to embody in exemplary fashion all the salient characteristics of the sermon, that to the student of our homiletical literature Jacob Anatoli will always rank high, not for his contributions to philosophy, if such there be in his work, but for his homiletical powers and the significant role he played as preacher, one of the earliest and most notable voices vocalizing Judaism's message in the medieval Synagogue.

2

The life of Jacob ben Abba Mari Anatoli, like that of many another great name come down to us from the Middle Ages, is somewhat shrouded in obscurity. Yet, certain autobiographical notes given in the Introduction and dispersed through the sermons, seem to lift the veil from some of the main facts of his career. Born in southern France, about 1194, he came under the influence of Samuel Ibn Tibbon,[4] the celebrated translator of Maimuni's *Guide to the Perplexed*, who

[4] 1150–1230.

initiated him into the philosophy of Maimonides and the novel methods of scriptural interpretation.[5] From Ibn Tibbon, whose son-in-law he became, he thus received the first impulse to explore the wider realms of human thought and to search in Scripture for more recondite and luminous meanings. Gradually, as his knowledge increased, he began to expound biblical texts in the Maimonidean manner, before such limited assemblages as congregated at weddings and on other similar occasions. The novelty of the new style in exegesis as well as the wider vistas thus opened to his hearers, must have excited much interest in the community at large, or the insistence that he enlarge the circle of his auditors and multiply the occasions of his public appearance would not have been forthcoming. Accordingly, what was begun as a sporadic attempt to enlighten the few grew by mutual agreement into an established weekly practice, for the instruction and edification of the many. On Sabbath afternoons, presumably, with the theme of the discourse suggested by the scriptural lesson of the week, Anatoli endeavored strenuously, and without fear of adverse criticism,[6] to dissipate the clouds of intellectual darkness, and to kindle a new love and comprehension of the multifarious thoughts and truths enshrined in the sacred Word.

But with the growth of anti-Maimuni feeling in southern France, aroused chiefly by his rationalization of biblical narrative and the consequent attenuation of its underlying doctrine, the popularity of Anatoli's sermons waned and vanished. Opposition too strong to overcome, forced him to retire from a task in which he engaged with such exalted aims

[5] הקדמה.

[6] "Although I am aware that this novel interpretation will be regarded as too bold, some men of learning even branding it as a figment of the imagination, none the less I persist in advancing it, willingly subjecting myself to their disparagement and revilement"—בראשית, p. 6b.

and hopes.[7] At this juncture, it would seem, a wider opportunity for the exercise of his talents presented itself to him. The last great ruler of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, Frederick II, the most enlightened and cultured monarch of his day, at whose court in Naples many an able scholar found shelter and encouragement, invited Anatoli to join the ranks of those who labored to make the intellectual achievements of the East accessible to the western mind.[8] Specifically, his was the task to render Arabic works into Hebrew. In this undertaking, he was closely associated with Michael Scot,[9] of whose friendship and helpfulness he makes frequent mention, and some of whose comments and observations he incorporated in his own exposition.[10] In this way, Anatoli became an important factor in the movement which culminated in the Renaissance.[11]

Of his life in Naples, aside from his literary labors, we possess little information. However, from the general tone of the Introduction to his sermons, written in Naples, about 1249, we may confidently infer that the opponents of his outlook and methods, even as those of his master's, Moses Maimonides, were as numerous and as intolerant there as in France. The vehement plea for a reverential attitude toward the learned and the pious,[12] while specifically directed in behalf of Maimonides "who spoke by divine inspiration," may have had a personal background as well, and that not far removed from the scene of his labors. At all events, it is

[7] הקדמה.

[8] Occasionally Anatoli refers to an interpretation of some word or concept suggested by the king himself—בא, p. 53b; ויקרא, p. 92b.

[9] 1175–1232.

[10] הקדמה; בראשית, p. 1b, 5b, etc.

[11] Among the better known of his translations are the Commentaries of Averroes, the Almagest of Ptolemy, the Treatise on Syllogism of Al-Farabi, and the Elements of Astronomy of Al-Fargani.

[12] בא, p. 52b.

not likely that a man of his temperament and zeal would have preserved his equanimity, and silence, in the midst of a raging controversy in which his own position as a thinker was seriously challenged.

The full record of his views and aims is written with clarity and force in the only original work that bears his name, the מלמד התלמידים, "Goad to the Disciples." With characteristic modesty, he disclaims any intention to impart new wisdom; his sole aim being to afford direction and stimulus by means of the wisdom of the ancients, who are the true guides to truth. His, only the staff; theirs, the iron point at its end—the real goad.[13] And indeed, as he himself informs us, it was only after he had been forced by strong opposition to relinquish preaching as a mode of self-expression, that he resolved to transmit his message to his children, and to his people, as an inheritance, part of the eternal heritage of the congregation of Jacob.[14] It would seem, therefore, that the forty-six sermons composing the volume embraced, in the main, the sermons he had actually preached before congregational assemblies, though fresh material may have been added from time to time ere the completion and final appearance of the work.[15]

Though Anatoli died in 1256 and men of learning were

[13] הקדמה.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] While, according to the stated plan of the author, the forty-six sermons are so arranged as to correspond in their order to the pericopes of the synagogal calendar (הקדמה), certain omissions and deviations should be noted. The collection contains no sermons on ויקהל and פקודי; instead, it includes one on פרשת זכור and one on פרשת פרה. For מצורע, אחרי מות, and בחקותי, sermons are altogether lacking, though in the case of בחקותי some part of its content is animadverted upon in the sermon on בהר. Similar omissions occur with respect to חקת, מסעי, ראה, כי תצא, וילך, האזינו, and וזאת הברכה. In the case of ראה, the sermon on שמיני is recommended for perusal and contemplation, and in the case of כי תצא, the one on כי תזריע is suggested. Of occasional sermons, there are only nine in number: שקלים (כי תשא), זכור, פרה, פסח (צו), שבועות, ראש השנה (נצבים), סכות, שבת שובה, and שמיני עצרת.

not slow to recognize the real merits of the *Malmad*,[16] the book did not reach publication in its present form until 1866, when the "Meḳize Nirdamim" society, on the basis of two complete manuscripts, prepared it for the press, thus reviving our interest in a well-nigh forgotten classic. Since that date, while no estimate, critical or otherwise, of the worth and significance of the book has been undertaken, the author of the *Malmad* has attracted considerable attention. And, indeed, even in a rich homiletical literature like ours, the name of Anatoli will forever remain enrolled among the early masters of the synagogal discourse.

3

The critical study of the products of our early preachers is attended by almost insurmountable difficulties. The sermon, unlike its Hebrew equivalent the *drashah*, is a form of literary expression used exclusively by members of a known profession. The discovery of an anonymous volume of sermons, for example, might challenge the most critical acumen to determine the name and date of the author; it would tax no one's ingenuity to ascertain the profession to which its author belonged. He must have been the occupant of a pulpit; he did preach. The *drashah*, on the other hand, though exact synonym for sermon, might have been composed by one who had never addressed a congregation. Being a part of Torah, it could well have emanated from a mind that had cultivated this particular branch of study. Very often writers of Responsa, skilled in the Law but not in public speaking, deliberately concluded an intricate legal discussion with a series of homilies couched in the best style of the practised preacher.

[16] As early as the 14th century, scholars quoted from Anatoli's work in support of their views. *See* Abudarham, Warsaw, 1877, p. 37: ובעל המלמד אומר . . .

And not infrequently among the sermons left by eminent Jewish preachers, we find a goodly number that failed of utterance in the pulpit.[17] In view of such common practices, it is decidedly unsafe to assume with any degree of certainty that the sermons in a given volume represent, in whole or in part, the pulpit pronouncements of the author.

Then, as regards the sermons of our medieval preachers, there is another circumstance that tends to complicate the question still further. While these sermons have been preserved for us in the Hebrew, originally they were spoken in the vernacular. To procure for them a wider reading-public, they were later rendered, by the preachers themselves, into Hebrew, the universal literary language of the Jews in the Middle Ages. It is quite apparent that whether they gained or lost in the process, the sermons emerged in different garb and in much altered mood. The qualities of the essay, rather than those of the address, often shine through their pages. In only a few rare instances have the authors succeeded in blending the vigor, spontaneity and vivacity of the spoken-word with the orderliness, moderation and accuracy of the written dissertation. Generally, what greets the eye of the reader is something different from what first delighted the ear of the listener. Especially is this true of the philosophical preachers, whose discourses are heavy-laden with thought and afford little suggestion as to what, aside from the deeply ethical and spiritual tone, appealed to the imagination of the popular mind.

Yet, despite the inconclusive character of our knowledge concerning the genesis and initial uses of these sermons, and

[17] In the בית מועד, Venice, 1605, a collection of fifty sermons by Menaḥem ben Moses Rabba of Padua, we find quite a number that never reached the stage of delivery, though they appear as carefully prepared as the sermons actually given.—*See* Zunz, *G. V. d. J.*, p. 442.

notwithstanding the certain metamorphosis they have undergone in the process of rendition, they still reveal to us, if not the precise pulpit technique, at least the general homiletical standards of the authors, and the religious conditions and problems of their respective ages. Even in their present form, they lay bare what is essential and indispensable to our understanding of the position and power of the sermon in the medieval Synagogue. In the absence of comprehensive information, we can concentrate all the more intently upon what is vital and permanent in these compositions. If we cannot hear the voice of the preacher distinctly, we may examine all the more closely his ideas, aims, and hopes. Thus, the sermons of Anatoli, while they fail to convey an exact impression of his actual manner in the pulpit, swathed as they are in the trappings of the trained literary craftsman, yield none the less an abundant supply of pertinent facts and implications relative to his theory of preaching, and a still more copious mass of material evidencing the supreme significance of his message for the men of his generation, and even for those of our own time.

If inclination and effort be taken to reflect native ability, Anatoli was a born preacher. The passion for preaching dominated all his thinking. Religious instruction, he avers, unlike that in other branches of learning, consists not of imparting a knowledge of facts and principles but of habituating the mind in the cultivation of virtuous qualities and in the rejection of all that is vicious and degrading.[18] Hence, great as is the mastery of truth, to which only rare individuals can attain, equally great is the mastery of souls; and those who feel impelled by a natural urge to stir the hearts of men and to implant in their consciousness a firm faith in the One God and a resolute will to pattern their lives after His attributes,

[18] בהר, p. 109.

rise to the spiritual heights occupied by Abraham, who braved personal danger and abuse in proclaiming religious truth to his generation.[19] Indeed, those who devote themselves to this task, faithfully following the footsteps of Abraham, hold an especial commission from God; for what worthier purpose can one hope to fulfil in life than to strive to bestow on others what one has so laboriously achieved within oneself, ignoring opposition and detraction?[20] True wisdom is unselfish. It craves to be shared. The truly wise man will freely dispense what he himself has so generously received, thus demonstrating his essentially divine nature.[21] Like the prophet of old, he will not be deterred by any timidity or fear from the exercise of his powers. Nor will he resort to indirection and innuendo in his utterances. Having qualified for the task before him, he will unshrinkingly speak words of admonition and reproof to the strong and weak alike.[22] For truth, buttressed by God himself whose very name is truth, need never boggle or tremble, even when great multitudes are arrayed against it.[23]

By the very nature of his being, beset as he is by passions and temptations which only too often bring injury and sorrow to his associates, man stands in great need of courageous teachers and monitors.[24] If it be, then, the paramount duty of the spiritual leaders to preach the truth to the masses and guide them in the path of piety and holiness, it is equally incumbent upon the people to welcome the instruction, and hearken gladly to the words of counsel, even to the rebuke, of their appointed teachers.[25] For just as man's powers can be classified into three separate categories, namely, those of growth, which he possesses in common with inanimate na-

[19] מקץ, p. 36b. [20] ואתחנן, p. 157a. [21] חיי שרה, p. 23a.
[22] פנחס, p. 151a; ואתחנן, p. 157b. [23] ואתחנן, p. 157b.
[24] קדושים, p. 104a. [25] אמור, p. 108a; וישב, p. 34a; פנחס, 105a.

ture; those of vitality and self-preservation, which he shares in common with all members of the animal kingdom; and those of expression, which he shares with none but angelic beings; so the masses of men, likewise, may be grouped into three corresponding classes. There are those whose chief employment consists in aiding the process of growth. They are the peasants, artisans, merchants, and the like. Then there are those who busy themselves with the tasks and problems of associated life, working for the preservation and proper organization of their species. They are the leaders in economics and politics, who seek to promote unity and cohesiveness within the life of the group. But, raised above these, there is a third class, composed of men who embody the power of expression. They are few in number, but being lovers of truth, of wisdom, and of ultimate goals, they may be described as the fruit on the tree of humanity, to which trunk and branch and leaf must ever remain secondary and subservient. Accordingly, to achieve the desired coordination of the various forces and functions of society, the lower must learn to submit itself to the guidance of the higher, through all the manifold gradations. And any self-exaltation that spurns superior counsel and frowns upon the teachers of religious truth, tends not only to undermine the social order but also to imperil the very existence of our faith.[26]

Of course, the privilege as well as duty of pronouncing judgment on the conduct of others, imposes upon the preacher the concomitant obligation to keep his own character clean and free from reproach, or his words will fail to carry conviction.[27] Yet, this prerequisite to effective preaching, while irresistible in its logical and moral compulsion, can afford no ground of exemption from the necessity, in all cases, of heeding the admonition of the religious teacher.

[26] קרח, p. 143a–144a; בהר, p. 110a. [27] אמור, p. 106b; פנחס, p. 149a.

This is a duty that will brook no exceptions. The preacher himself, as may well happen, though of spotless character in all other respects, may yet evince a moral failing of most reprehensible nature; nevertheless, as he is not free to desist from preaching on the very sin that mars his own conduct, so is none of his hearers at liberty to discredit or belittle the truth he teaches, despite the patent contradiction involved. Truth is not vitiated by man's inconsistencies.[28] The important thing to remember is that none can attain unto perfection unaided. Even the great leader Moses had to defer to the counsel of Jethro, who was neither his peer nor even of the same racial stamp.[29] And, surely, if the Sabbath day and Holy Days are invested with an especial sanctity, is it not because large numbers of men who have to labor for their daily bread and are thus denied the opportunity to study Torah, may forgather on these consecrated days and join not only in a service of worship but also in the contemplation of religious truth as expounded by the teacher?[30]

And indeed, in Judaism, which is essentially a religion of Torah, something more is required of the teacher than the ability and courage to reprobate sin and excoriate the sinner. Above all else, if he is to instruct men aright, he must be an explorer and interpreter of transmitted truth. For Torah, which is the heritage of the congregation of Jacob, implies more than a body of ancient religious lore; it also signifies a particular method of approach, such a minute study and careful probing of the truth embodied in the text as will disclose its deeper meaning and wider application.[31] It is this signification of the word Torah, directing our attention to the search for underlying truth, that strips scriptural study of the pedantry in which so-called biblical scholars, forever

[28] בהר, p. 108a. [29] משפטים, p. 72b.
[30] קדושים, p. 104b; במדבר, p. 112b. [31] ויחי, p. 44.

harping on verbal minutiae, have invested it.[32] Likewise, it is this emphasis on thought and truth, rather than on words and phrases, that would restore reason to its rightful place and level the artificial barriers which a misguided obscurantism has erected between Hebrew lore and the wisdom that flows from other cultures.[33] For once we center our attention on the profundities of the Torah, on such concepts as the unity of God, the love of God, the will of God, how can we escape the necessity of carrying on the closest scrutiny, and this on the basis of reason and with the aid of sources other than our own?[34] What distinguishes man from all other creatures? Is it not his power of thought, his searching mind?[35] And what branch of human wisdom is there that can be dispensed with in our endeavor to arrive at a fuller knowledge of God?[36] Truly, in all stages of life, if we seek permanent peace for our souls, we shall direct our steps towards God with our reasoning faculties in the vanguard;[37] and, if we are to enter into His innermost abode, we shall scale the heights of the natural sciences, assured that at the summit we shall find Him.[38]

But, alas! let one feel the urge to master some foreign lore, seeing that it enables him by the added light to discern more clearly the true meaning of the Torah itself, and most of his contemporaries will not hesitate to ascribe wickedness to his conduct.[39] Yea, our men of learning, perpetually occupied with the dialectics of the Talmud, deem all theological studies more harmful than trivial, and hence seek to belabor them with the invectives which only a besotted intelligence could invent.[40] Of course, they still read the Scriptures, repeating like school-children the weekly lesson assigned to them, but they are too indolent to bring their best powers to bear upon

[32] מקץ, p. 35a. [33] הקדמה. [34] *Ibid.*
[35] תרומה, p. 73b. [36] ואתחנן, p. 159b. [37] בהעלותך, p. 130b.
[38] בא, p. 54a. [39] הקדמה. [40] *Ibid.*

the truth of the section read. Thus, we leave the field open to hosts of unbelievers who, because of their superior knowledge and insight, find it easy to supplant in men's minds the true with the false. In our extreme slothfulness, we have neglected the cultivation of the truth as it emanated from God; and well may the destroyers of our faith taunt us, that while we still cling to the rind of the fruit, they are in full possession of its very meat![41]

To deny the mature mind the unrestricted exercise of his mental faculties in the search for religious truth, is to withhold from a sound body the enjoyment of meat and wine.[42] To be sure, there are minds so dull that they are incapable of receiving certain types of instruction without experiencing an emotion akin to revulsion. They bristle with antagonism when ideas beyond their reach dangle before their eyes. They have been feeding on "hay and straw" for too long a time. From such minds, it is well to conceal thoughts and interpretations which they may construe as statements of unbelief. But the man who finds no satisfaction in the "grass of the field," will naturally hunger "to hear the words of the Lord;" and what may be unsavoury to others will prove most palatable to him.[43] For man is fundamentally a spiritual personality; and without the perfection of soul which the trained intelligence can compass, his superiority to the animal vanishes.[44] Hence, to grasp as much of the truth as is humanly possible, he must lay the whole realm of knowledge under tribute; especially must he be able to draw upon mathematics, natural science, and theology.[45] Moreover, in gathering this knowledge, he must be willing to learn from all men, whether they be of high or low station, whether they be members of his own faith or belong to other faiths, whether they be

[41] *Ibid.* [42] שמיני, p. 99a. [43] בשלח, p. 58b.
[44] פרה, p. 89a. [45] בהעלותך, p. 135a.

believers or infidels. In the province of learning, as in the field of practical everyday living, we should break the nut open, enjoy the meat, and discard the shell.[46]

Yet, with all our eagerness to acquire the largest measure of truth, it behooves us to remember that there are limits to our powers and attainments. We cannot always rely upon the conclusions of the mind; and since knowledge divorced from piety can endure but for a while, we must never allow ourselves to treat lightly the principles and injunctions of the Torah.[47] There can be too much analysis and exploration as there can be too little. Independent study and investigation are eminently worth while, if they be motivated by a desire to build up and not to destroy. In this, as in all matters pertaining to the proper conduct of life, extremes should be avoided.[48]

This spirit of inquiry which the teacher of Torah must cultivate diligently if not recklessly, will unlock to him treasures of ethical thought hitherto unnoticed and unsuspected. For the chief function of Torah is always to lead man into the path of righteousness. Biblical narratives are not mere reproductions of historical episodes; they teem with lessons of eternal truth.[49] Prophetic utterances, often transcending human experience, contain matter of greater import than the surface meaning could convey; and they will open their inner secret only to those who sedulously labor to find it.[50] Rabbinic pronouncements, when baffling to the understanding, call us to pause and ponder; some abstruse idea, intended only for the elect, lurks behind the veil of mystery.[51] For the prophets and sages, great popular teachers

[46] וארא, p. 49a; פנחס, p. 150b. [47] וארא, p. 49b; בהעלותך, p. 131b.
[48] בראשית, pp. 4a, 8a; שלח, p. 141a.
[49] וירא, p. 18b; וישלח, p. 31a; בשלח, p. 58a.
[50] במדבר, p. 115b. [51] חבא, p. 171a; מתן תורה, p. 119a.

though they were, aimed their words at the loftiest intellect as well. To meet the spiritual needs of all, without ignoring the unequal mental attainments of men, they had to devise a method and manner of expression that would, like the manna of old, supply sustenance to the small and the large, the weak and the robust, the slow and the nimble. We shall therefore descry in the stream of their thought a twofold parallel motion such as that of an upper and a lower current. Their statements in addition to the literal and transparent meaning, will often point to more obscure and also more profound intimations, which only the most discerning intellect could penetrate.[52] Herein lies the true greatness of Moses Maimonides. The secret of his extraordinary power and service stands revealed in the fact that important ideas and truths stored in the treasure-house of Jewish thought and long hidden from the view of most of our wise men, he succeeded in laying hold of and in bringing, to some degree at least, within our limited ken.[53]

The Torah in thus proposing to teach all men in accordance with their mental and moral capacity, suggests to us not only our duty as truth-seekers but also our responsibility as teachers and interpreters of the truth to the people, the large heterogeneous mass. As most men are incapable of perceiving the subtler aspects of ideas, so they are hardly qualified to cope with questions of belief in a philosophic and devout temper. Popular religion is not intelligent enough to benefit by the infiltration of new ideas. Nor is it sufficiently fortified to withstand the shock of disturbing thought.[54] Therefore, the wise teacher will scrupulously guard against the temptation to voice his more recondite interpretations

[52] מתן תורה, p. 116b; בשלח, p. 58b; פרה, p. 88b.
[53] מתן תורה, p. 119.
[54] הקדמה; בראשית, p. 3a; וארא, p. 51a.

before all men, indiscriminately. His aim will always be to help and strengthen and not to upset and uproot.[55] Aware of the great need of men for more light, and not for increased confusion, and impressed with the fact that our ancient teachers, in casting their thoughts in symbolic mould, skilfully contrived to conceal from the untrained mind what they fain would reveal to the cultivated intelligence, he will strive with tongue and pen so to instruct and enlighten the people as to benefit all and injure none.[56]

True to his own theory of preaching, Anatoli invariably treats his textual material in a way that will satisfy the simplest intelligence and yet not leave the superior mind unfed. Mindful of the twofold function of the popular interpreter, and never insensible to the larger task of the true student of Torah, he always gives his immediate attention to what is instructive and significant in the literal meaning of the text, and then, not without due warning, he turns to the consideration of its richer possibilities and less evident implications.[57] The transition from the obvious to the abstruse is generally accomplished by the introduction of the allegorical method. The preacher, bent upon uncovering hidden truths, has recourse to the now well-known device of identifying persons with abstract qualities and the relation of events with the description of processes. Thus, the offspring of Adam and Eve symbolize the three active powers or faculties of the intelligent soul, in their progressive development. Cain, the first-born and tiller of the soil, represents that rational faculty by means of which we acquire the aptitude to do the practical tasks that fall in the sphere of agriculture, medicine, seamanship, and the like, upon the proper per-

[55] נח, p. 9a; וישלח, p. 32b.

[56] בראשית, p. 6b; וארא, p. 51a.

[57] חיי שרה, p. 21b— . . . ומעתה נתחיל ונבאר הדרך הנסתר—*see also* p. 19a.

formance of which our physical existence largely depends. Abel the shepherd, the leader of the flock, may be said to stand for that faculty or power of mind by which we contemplate the task before us, raising questions concerning our ability to do it and the best way of doing it. The third son, Seth, the father of Enosh in whose day men began to call upon the name of the Lord, represents the third stage in mind-development, the birth of the higher faculty by which we soar to loftier realms and attain unto pure wisdom.[58] Thus, too, the garden of Eden with its many goodly trees, symbolizes the entire field of human knowledge. The Tree of Life, standing in the midst of the garden, represents theology, the center and source of all higher forms of wisdom. The Tree of Knowledge denotes specifically the science of political economy which, necessary though it be for social stability, will eventually, when made man's sole interest, cause his degradation and downfall.[59] It is also by the employment of this allegorical method that we are enabled to see in the graphic story of the gruesome fate of the generation of the Flood, with its climax of the heroic rescue of Noah and the divine promise to subsequent generations as prefigured in the emblem of the rainbow, a lesson fraught with menace and hope for the men of our own time. For we, no less than those of an earlier age, are in perpetual danger of becoming engulfed in the turbulent waters of temptation and sin. And how shall we ward off the threatening waves, if not by fashioning for ourselves an Ark of the spirit, with noble deeds for gopher wood and deep humility for a coat of tar, in whose lower, second and third stories, corresponding to the three vertical compartments of wisdom, mathematics, physics, and theology, respectively, we shall be lifted above the rag-

[58] *Ibid.* p. 22.

[59] קרח, p. 142.

ing flood of evil and be brought under the arching bow of promise?[60]

This method of interpretation, allowing of such unrestricted freedom to the imagination, appears of too arbitrary a character to appeal to the modern mind. Yet, in the case of Anatoli, it proved productive of a rich and diversified homiletical content as well as of a broad, enlightened and rational faith. With the use of the symbol and allegory forever at his command, there was little of the knowledge he had acquired in fields other than Jewish, that could not be grafted on, or pressed into the service of, Judaism. Like Maimonides, his master and guide, he felt at liberty, by the exercise of this method, to exert his powers of interpretation in a way that would help to naturalize alien ideas and rationalize native mysteries. Even where the bed was too short for a man to stretch himself, and the covering too narrow when he gathered himself up, he yet strove to enlarge the place of his tent and stretch forth the curtains of his habitation. Believing as he did that God's truth as embodied in the Scriptures was

[60] נח, p. 12.—Frequently, Anatoli undertakes to read a symbolic meaning into Jewish customs and ceremonial observances. The custom, for example, of increasing the use of milk and honey on the Feast of Weeks arises from the fact that milk, so essential a part of our diet in the various stages of our growth, symbolizes the common religious obligations specified in the Torah and imposed on the people in the mass, while honey, with its rich flavor and nutritive strength, represents those profounder aspects of religious truth which the Torah discloses but which only rare individuals can fully comprehend (מתן תורה, p. 121b). The wedding ring, with its ornamental quality and circular form, speaks of ideal conjugal relations. The good wife will regard her husband as the ornament of her life; and, like the fine adjustment of the ring to the finger, being neither too loose nor too tight, she will cling to him with the certainty that he will never attempt to oppress her (בטדבר, p. 111b). Again, the Sukkah is symbol of insecurity and faith. The booth, temporary habitation of field-worker and camp-dweller, forcefully reminds us that though we have gathered in the fruits of our labor and are comfortably sheltered within our homes of plenty, we are beholden to God's love and care for all we have and are. But for His will, we should have toiled and striven in vain (לחג הסוכות, p. 187b).

both comprehensive and eternal, he could not but regard the newer ideas, if at all reasonable and valid, as sparks of the same divine flame, to be cherished and used rather than despised and quenched. The prospect, therefore, of enlarging the ancient framework of Jewish thought so as to make room for the free inclusion of recognized truths flowing from foreign sources, stirred his imagination and released the energies of his vigorous mind. Of course, he realized that it was not always possible to obtain biblical sanction for the noblest idea without resorting to most ingenious devices and at times even to downright pretence. Yet, it was his conviction that if the truth to be imparted was essential and urgent, the feebleness of scriptural support should not hinder its propagation. Our ancient teachers, he averred, never hesitated to urge upon us lessons of supreme importance even when only the slightest warrant for their truth were available in Scripture. Very often, lacking authoritative proof of a convincing nature, they seized upon the most inconclusive of biblical citations, not with a view of finding therein clear confirmation of their doctrine, but with the deliberate aim of making the truth prevail by investing it, in the eyes of the people at least, with a large measure of sanctity and peremptoriness.[61]

Armed in this manner, Anatoli proceeded to devote himself to the task of so moulding the flexible material as to broaden the base of his inherited ideas and beliefs and thus widen the horizon of his contemporaries. For in a religion like Judaism, with its divine decrees and legal codes, wherein essential principle and accidental expression jostle one another as they come to claim priority, the mind can be rescued from the confusion that threatens to overwhelm it only by the steadying influence of just evaluation and ra-

[61] מתן תורה, p. 117a.

tional interpretation. When Isaiah, for example, speaking in the name of God, cries out: "Is such the fast that I have chosen?";[62] when Zechariah, addressing himself to people and priest in like manner, says: "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and in the seventh month, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto Me, even to Me?";[63] and when Hosea proclaims in the name of the Lord: "For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings,"[64] they seem to point to an important distinction not clearly discernible in the current practices of the people. The religious discipline is an amalgam of means and ends. To exalt the end is not necessarily to belittle the means; yet not to differentiate between the two is to nullify the great task of religion. In the realm of the spiritual, as in the sphere of physical well-being, good health is maintained on a regimen of normal subsistence. The Torah, even as the human physician, prescribes for us the diet best calculated to preserve our strength. It is to know God, to cleave to His unity, to love Him, and to walk in His paths by performing acts of loving-kindness, of justice and of righteousness. But the soul, even as the body, wearies of a diet too familiar and constant. It craves for appetizers, so to speak, for things that will stimulate the senses and add interest and zest to the daily fare. And so visible signs and symbols, ceremonial observances, and ritual practices, meant to enliven the fancy and make established truth and principle more real and appealing, form the necessary accessories to the sound religious life. But there comes a time in the state of the soul, even as in the condition of the body, when debility and disorder attack the organism and sap it of vitality and strength. Its health is gone; its regular routine is interrupted. Nothing but the action of some powerful drug can restore it to its

[62] Isa. 58,5. [63] Zech. 7,5. [64] Hos. 6,6.

former vigor. The soul has sinned and lies helpless, but not hopeless. The divine Healer, ever solicitous for the welfare of His children, has prescribed the draught that will repair the shattered frame and revive the tastes and interests of former days. Such is the true function of sacrifices, of fasting and other penitential exercises. They serve in the place of medicaments, curing us of the ailment that has disrupted the health of the spirit, and aiding us in our endeavor to resume the normal ways of right living. But, surely, when God in His great compassion proffers us these sovereign remedies, it is not that He takes pleasure in potions and restoratives of any kind. Not in potent drug, but in robust health, not in sacrifice and affliction, but in righteousness and mercy, is the great delight of the Lord.[65]

It is chiefly through the interpretation of the sacred text, sometimes allegorical, more often literal, but always profound, that Anatoli seeks to communicate his enlightened views of religion. The attributes we ascribe to God, for example, are in reality qualities of character we discern in the conduct of man. The Torah, our common possession, speaks a language the human intelligence can readily understand. Hence, it paints the deity in the image of man. He walks and talks like man, He loves and hates like man, He sorrows and rejoices like man; though we know that "He hath neither bodily form nor substance: we can compare nought unto Him in His holiness." But in what other way, except the one employed in the Scriptures, could our limited comprehension be reached? This is the very thought expressed in the text from the Psalms: "They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy might; *to make known to the sons of men* His mighty acts, and the glory of the majesty of His kingdom."[66]

[65] דברים, pp. 154b–155; ויקרא, pp. 91b–92a; בלק, p. 147a.
[66] Ps. 145,11–12.

If in depicting the nature and works of God, the Torah uses words and images borrowed from the human vocabulary and our own sensory perceptions, it is solely because there is no other method by which a knowledge of His mighty acts can be conveyed to the sons of men.[67] Or, there is a sense in which religion's affirmation that life and death are conditioned by our choice of good and evil, may be regarded as an eternal moral truth. Of course, the imagery employed in the Bible and rabbinic literature to portray the close and exacting manner in which God scans the conduct of man, need not be taken to describe an actual process. When the Psalmist, invoking God's wrath upon the wicked, bursts out passionately: "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living";[68] when the rabbis, in their desire to protect us from sin, or to recapture our devotion to God and His law after we have once lapsed into it, resort to such all-too-realistic expressions as "All thy deeds are written in a book,"[69] "the ledger lies open, and the hand writes,"[70] "three books lie open on the day of the New Year," in which the fate of man, to live or to die during the current year, is definitely recorded,[71] we are obviously invited to contemplate a possible condition of the soul rather than a physical reality. We could no more construe these passages in a literal sense than we could the counsel of the wise man who said: "Write them upon the table of thy heart."[72] Nor is the thesis, that virtuous conduct merits and receives inscription in the book of life while wickedness and sin lead inevitably to the inclusion in the book of death, susceptible of practical verification. Surely, if sin entails the judgment of death, speedily rendered and executed, then those who survive from year to year may well consider themselves free from any guilt, altogether pure and

[67] חולדות, pp. 23b–24a. [68] Ps. 69,29. [69] Abot, II, 1.
[70] *Ibid.* III, 20. [71] R. H. 16b. [72] Prov. 3,3.

righteous. However, these statements, highly fanciful as they appear, hold a truth of much meaning and value. For life and death bear a spiritual as well as a physical connotation. The glory of the righteous man is that his soul is alive, growing unto ever greater fulness of life. The tragedy of the sinner is not that he ceases to be, but that he loses the essence of his being; his soul dies within him, even though his body lingers on. Hence the significance of the prophetic pronouncement: "Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."[73] The debased spirit deadened by sin will, through repentance, experience a rebirth and become once again a living soul.[74]

Again, the Torah is primarily a spiritual discipline. Its numerous injunctions and personal restrictions are chiefly to educate our wants. Our nature craves for the luxuries and superfluities of life, those things that add nothing to our manhood and tend to degrade the character. To train us for the task of controlling our desires, the enjoyment of certain foods is denied us. We are forbidden to eat the meat of certain animals, both of land and of sea, not because it is unfit for our consumption. Nothing could be abhorrent or injurious to us that is served as delicacy on royal tables. Besides, self-control can best be taught by enforcing abstention not from what is loathsome and unpalatable but rather from what ordinarily appeals to the taste and excites the appetite. It is this thought that is stressed in the text: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat."[75] The fruit of that forbidden tree proved too alluring to fore-

[73] Ezek. 18,27.

[74] נצבים, p. 175. [75] Gen. 3,6.

stall man's first disobedience. The stronger the temptation, the greater the disciplinary value of the prohibition.[76]

Yet, while stimulating ideas invariably flow forth from the text when tapped by the searching mind of Anatoli, it is not always the weighty thought deduced from biblical verse or rabbinical passage, that absorbs the attention of the preacher. Frequently, what engages his attention is the simple meaning of the text itself quite apart from the contemplated homiletical superstructure. At such times, not so much the profound preacher, as the deft exegete, captivates the fancy and evokes admiration. There is much charm and simplicity in many a suggested construction of his, which is luminous and convincing as well. Take, for example, the fifth commandment with its declaration, "that thy days may be long upon the land."[77] This clause, says Anatoli, states an inevitable fact, describes a natural consequence, rather than a divinely-promised reward. The man who cherishes the honor of his father and mother implants in his own children a reverence for parenthood and a deep solicitude for the physical welfare of parents, a moral training that cannot but result in the prolongation of his own life.[78] Or, consider God's promise to Israel that as a reward for his implicit obedience to divine commandment and statute, he will be afflicted with none of the ailments to which Egypt has been subjected. "I will put none of the diseases upon thee," thus runs the biblical verse, "which I have put upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that healeth thee."[79] The given reason, "for I am the Lord that healeth thee," seems totally irrelevant and pointless. An affliction never visited upon a person, should be well able to dispense with all medical treatment. But the function of the physician, observes Anatoli, is a twofold one. On the one

[76] נשא, p. 125b. [77] Ex. 20,12.
[78] יתרו, p. 70b. [79] Ex. 15,26.

hand, when disease attacks the body, it is the physician whose medicinal applications may bring relief and ultimately remove the cause of the trouble. On the other hand, when no physical disturbance manifests itself, it is the aim and duty of the skilled physician so to order the life and activities of the person in his charge that he will acquire immunity from the encroachment of disease. Herein lies the force of the verse in question: Israel, living in harmony with the divine law, will suffer none of the disorders that ravaged the Egyptians, since God himself will be his physician.[80] Again, when we examine the rabbinic dictum concerning the type of man whose motto is: "What is mine is thine and what is thine is mine,"[81] we find, if we follow the customary rendition, that the attitude herein expressed merits condemnation, since it is branded as that of the עם הארץ, "the boor." But, Anatoli protests, such a reciprocal relationship as is here indicated, far from being deprecated, ought to receive our approval and encouragement. For, barring the maxim of the "saint": "What is mine is thine and what is thine is thine," what better principle can we formulate for the happy conduct of society than just this one, which insists on mutual services and benefits? The term עם הארץ in this connection, therefore, cannot be rendered in its usual disparaging sense; it must rather be construed in its more literal signification, denoting "the people of the land," the common mass, the civilized community.[82] Or, to cite one more example, the declaration of an ancient teacher, which is also incorporated in the synagogal liturgy, that God renews daily the works of creation,[83] would seem to posit a doctrine not readily conceivable. Are we to understand that the whole process of creation, as described in the opening chapter of the Bible, is re-enacted every day?

[80] בשלח, p. 60a. [81] Abot, V, 13.
[82] וירא, p. 18b. [83] Ḥag. 12b.

Certainly not; yet the work of creation is continuous, a spectacle of daily occurrence. It is the constant operation of atmosphere and light upon the productive soil, that makes vegetation possible. Thus, by the will of God, the work of creation is daily renewed and demonstrated.[84]

4

The significance of the sermon in the history of our cultural development has received to this date the scantiest of appreciation. Our histories deal, in the main, with important events and persons, with things that happened and with lives that mattered. Chronicles and biographies—these are the creations as well as the sources of our historians. To be sure, the literary products of the past have never suffered neglect. For countless generations, multitudinous students, with indescribable diligence, have pored over the pages of our literature, and in times more recent, have employed their prodigious talents in the effort to determine the setting, and ascertain the content, of our cultural heritage. What the moulders of our faith have wrought and taught, stands revealed to us today in a clearer light than has been deemed possible. But what still remains shrouded in obscurity, with little or no attempt being made to lift the veil of darkness, is the inner life of the masses of the people. We know now, in great measure, what Judaism is and has been, but we still grope in the dark as to how much of it, and in what spirit, the people, in the various periods of our history, actually accepted and practised. Particularly is this true of the mediæval period, when code followed code in rapid succession, and new ideas and outlooks, notwithstanding a most stubborn resistance, became ever more persistent and clamorous. The sermons of our representative preachers, while adding

[84] מקץ, p. 38a.

little that is new to our knowledge of Judaism, disclose an insight into the religious life of the people nowhere else discernible. Close contact with the masses, conditioned by the very nature of his talent and aims, opened to the preacher a field of observation not readily falling within the restricted visual range of the isolated scholar. The doctrines he stresses, the sins and shortcomings he condemns, lay bare the wants and the weaknesses, the mental gropings and moral failings, of the men of his own age and clime. As criticism of life, therefore, the sermon proffers us authentic glimpses of contemporaneous thought and behavior, not of the rare individual, but of the average member of the group.

Viewed from this angle, the sermons of Anatoli are of more than literary and biographical interest to us; reflecting the religious trends and habits of the people, they also have for us considerable cultural value. For Anatoli, whatever degree of originality we grant or deny him, must be accorded a place of preëminence among the philosophical preachers of the Middle Ages, with whom reason rather than prejudice, ideas and facts rather than superstition and fancy, formed the natural background of Judaism and its message. Possessed of such an outlook and temper, he could not but collide and join in resolute conflict with the crude notions and performances of the entrenched piety of the day. His formulation of the principles and mandates of our faith, therefore, which the study of his sermons inevitably yields, holds for us today an interest transcending the person of the preacher and the importance of the exposition.

In consonance with the basic belief of Jewish thinkers and interpreters of all ages, Anatoli plants himself firmly upon the faith that "the Lord, He is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath; there is none else."[85] All things emanate

[85] Deut. 4,39.

from God, and are subject to His will. Rain and wind, the simplest phenomena of nature, issue from His power.[86] If our solemn Feasts coincide with the birth of Spring, Summer and Fall, it is to teach us that not Nature, but God, controls our destinies and sustains our lives.[87] Other creatures, too, come under His providential care, but only in the aggregate, as a species; we humans, bearing the divine image, receive individual supervision and attention.[88] Not that man is the center and goal of creation. It is erroneous to think that this glorious world came into being to serve and exalt man. Not man's worth, but God's will, determined the nature and order of the universe.[89] To love Him and reverence His name, —this is all we know, and all we need to know. All qualities of worthy character spring from this reverent attachment to God.[90] All the good we do, unless accompanied by a consciousness of His presence, must fail to effect the perfection of our nature.[91] God alone is the source of our being, our sole mainstay and support; and the practice prevalent in some places to invoke the aid of any intermediary force, such as angels and the like, goes counter to the spirit of the Decalogue and must be branded as absolutely vicious.[92]

But this all-absorbing faith in God must be kept pure, free from any admixture of material and corporeal notions.[93] There is no form or image to which we can liken Him; there is no attribute ascribed to Him but what mirrors the limitations of human expression rather than the true nature of His powers.[94] Yet most people, many scholars among them, are led astray by the anthropomorphic descriptions of God in which the Scriptures abound. They fail to see that the Bible,

[86] אמור, p. 107b. [87] מתן תורה, p. 121b. [88] יתרו, p. 65a.
[89] תרומה, p. 73b. [90] פנחס, p. 149b. [91] דברים, p. 155b.
[92] יתרו, p. 68a. [93] שלח, p. 140b.
[94] תרומה, p. 74a; ש״ש, p. 181b; יתרו, p. 61a.

employing our human vocabulary, strives to translate spiritual truths into terms comprehensible to man. Thus, in a state of confusion and blindness they go groping about, until their very faith, hardened into a stumblingblock, hurls them into the pit of superstition and vain imaginings.[95] They people the atmosphere with demons of all sorts, and fall victim to the heresy that it is these evil spirits, flitting about in the world, which seek to tempt them and corrupt their ways.[96] They picture Satan as a real person, and dub him absolute potentate in the realm of sin, as if two powers were contending in this world for supremacy.[97] They do not know, or cannot grasp, that it is our earthly nature with its inclination toward evil, which finds symbolic representation in the figure of Satan; just as the infernal Serpent who deceived the mother of mankind is none other than the sensuous flesh personified.[98] Thus, unable or unwilling to peer into the true signification of figurative phrase and symbolic act, they espouse with fanatic zeal numerous false conceptions and bizarre beliefs which in no way are distinguishable from positive unbelief and downright denial. Yet, and of this they seem unaware, the merit that inheres in the living of the good life, even when heightened by extraordinary philanthropic endeavors and unexampled renunciation of worldly pleasures, will retain little of its nobility and influence if perpetually nurtured by spurious faith and impure beliefs.[99]

How, then, are we to overcome superstition and purge faith of its impurities? Many are the safeguards Judaism affords, and the term Torah comprehends them all. The ways of God are charted in the Law of God; to study and observe that law is to attain unto pure piety.[100] The religious mind, therefore, will cleave with steadfast faith to whatever the

[95] ש״ש, p. 184a. [96] *Ibid.* p. 183a. [97] נצבים, p. 173b.
[98] ש״ש, p. 183b. [99] *Ibid.* p. 182a. [100] בהר, p. 110.

Torah prescribes, deeming it more certain and compelling than anything which logic and observation may dictate.[101] He will seek to know God by striving to understand and faithfully to follow the mandates of his religion as enunciated in the Scriptures and traditional lore, mandates which are calculated to give stability to human wisdom and rescue the soul from spiritual death and darkness.[102] To be sure, not all the laws ordained for our good compel the assent of reason. Many a decree, failing to satisfy the understanding, appears unnecessary and burdensome. But the truly pious, aware that the essential aim of our religious discipline is to inure the soul to a life of holiness, will spurn none of its regulations, whether buttressed by reason or not.[103] Nor will he draw any distinction between the written law and the oral traditions. Moses, chief of the prophets, with whom God spoke face to face, communicated to the men of his own time a full knowledge of the nature and the proper method of observance of every divine command. This oral instruction, transmitted from generation to generation, bears the stamp of authenticity and partakes of the binding character of the written Word.[104] In fact, the succinct way in which the Mosaic enactments are expressed, when the narrative portions of the Pentateuch are generally so elaborate and complete in all details, would seem to argue a strong desire on the part of the legislator that not the written statement of the law, but the oral explanation of its purpose and method, should determine its proper enforcement.[105] Besides, since the admonition to heed the decisions of contemporary judges is urged upon us in the Torah itself,[106] such statutes and ordinances as come from the teachers of any given time must of necessity have

[101] בראשית, p. 1b. [102] וינש, p. 41a.
[103] קדושים, pp. 102b–103a. [104] שמיני עצרת, p. 192a.
[105] ואתחנן, p. 158b. [106] Deut. 17,9–10.

the force and sanctity of the fundamental law.[107] Hence, the intelligent person, laboring for self-mastery, will always abide by the teachings of tradition and never seek by open violation or verbal detraction to impair their strength and influence.[108]

The value of obedience to a program of belief and action, however, lies not so much in the meticulous performance of its specified details, as in the purity of motive which prompts the faithful allegiance, and in the spirit of devotion which accompanies the punctilious observance. Conformity ceases to be a virtue when it sinks into insensibility. Like the burden-bearing mule, conscious only of the heaviness of its load, the mechanical conformist labors without knowing why and trudges along without knowing whither.[109] Religious faith, to achieve stability and permanence, must necessarily assume a variety of external forms and expressions; but of what worth can the outer act or utterance be, if it fail to vitalize and strengthen the faith it embodies?[110] Yet, "I see many men who wear the phylacteries and fasten the *mezuzah* to the door-post, without giving any thought to the meaning of the inscriptions they encase, not to speak of the religious ideas these objects suggest and stress. They busy themselves with these rites as if they were just rolling up their belts, or attending to some such inconsequential matter. But, in truth, the fulfilment of our religious obligations requires a genuine response of the heart. The artisan who builds a house centers his thought first upon the manner of its construction and then, when the task is done, upon the purpose for which it is designed. Similarly, he who would perform the rites of his religion should endeavor, first of all, to understand their nature, and then to concentrate his attention upon their sym-

[107] משפטים, p. 72a. [108] וארא, p. 51b.
[109] פרה, p. 88a; חבא, p. 170a. [110] מתן תורה, p. 123a; במדבר, p. 112b.

bolic significance."[111] Surely, loud recitations and free bodily gestures could not take the place of inner feeling. Though alive in every limb, if the heart is asleep, how can we hope to come under the benign rule of the heavenly King? "I know that such utterances will meet with little approval, addicted as people are to these evil practices; but, as I have frequently stated, the truth must not shrink timidly into silence. It must cry out from the housetops, even if there be only a single person who is ready to welcome it."[112] The service of God is not meant for the honor of man. The duties we owe to God are not financial debts to be paid off in the current exchange. "What can it profit a man to study Torah all through life, if he never attempts to fathom the real purpose of such study? What can it profit a man to repair to the synagogue for divine worship, if he prays with open lips and closed heart, and lifts eyes heavenward, which never have seen the light? Were it not better for such a man to remain at home? . . . And the same holds true of the man who proclaims God's unity with much swaying of the head, as if to emphasize the glad acceptance of His sovereignty, while his mind is tainted with corporeal images of the deity or with just idle thoughts. Can we conceive of a mortal prince who would find such an approach acceptable? Would he not regard this kind of address as the inane babbling of a distempered mind, to be banned rather than blessed?"[113]

Compliance with the law is not fully met by routine performance.[114] Grace before meals is not a barren formula; its aim is to remind us that physical life must be consecrated to the service of God.[115] Prayer is not a function of the organs of speech, like the chirping of the bird; it is the heartfelt expression of our longing for God, which alone raises us above all

[111] ואתחנן, p. 163b. [112] *Ibid.* p. 159a. [113] פנחס, p. 148b.
[114] בהעלותך, p. 129a. [115] תרומה, p. 74a.

other creatures and makes us worthy of the divine image we bear.[116] In all the diverse elements of our religious discipline, we detect this twofold combination: visible, material form, and hidden, spiritual substance; and, in all cases, it is the latter that excels the former in beauty and worth.[117] Even in the realm of ethics, not the deed, but the consciousness of its lofty purpose, its ideal end, confers merit upon the individual soul.[118] Justice and mercy, when exercised for personal glory and not in response to impulses for good deeply stirring within the heart, lose their divine quality and potency.[119] To the religious man, therefore, the external act is important and sacred because it enshrines a blessed reality. Thus, he cherishes the study of Torah and the observance of ritual law because they tend to further his progress in the knowledge of God. Yea, he eats and drinks and indulges in other physical pleasures with eagerness and zest, because he knows that without robust bodily health one cannot serve God energetically and joyfully.[120]

Accordingly, in Judaism, not abstention from sensuous delights, but the sublimation of all earthly pleasures, is repeatedly urged and accentuated. Asceticism, which exalts self-inflicted poverty and pain, and denominates the natural cravings of the flesh unclean and vile, is altogether foreign to the spirit of our religion. "Loving the soul as He does, God cannot despise the human body, so essential to self-preservation and the perpetuation of the race. The *saints* of other groups, who live under the delusion that spiritual wholeness can be attained only through bodily affliction, show themselves capable of great cruelty and of still greater folly."[121] Self-denial, as fasting, is a medicine prescribed for the sick of

[116] *Ibid.* p. 73a. [117] פנחס, p. 149a.
[118] תשא, p. 80b. [119] במדבר, p. 112a.
[120] בהעלותך, p. 130a; ויצא, p. 29b; שמיני, p. 97b. [121] תשא, p. 79b.

soul; the feeding of the body with proper food, when prompted by a higher purpose, partakes of the very nature of righteousness.[122] Even to the soul that has sinned and requires forgiveness, Judaism with its doctrine of repentance offers more certain and more permanent restoration than does asceticism with its imposition of expiatory peregrinations and numerous hardships and deprivations of like nature.[123] Judaism teaches that of the transgressor a change of heart is demanded, and not the rigorous penance ordained by other faiths. It also teaches us that God loves life, and that He values man above all other creatures,—a doctrine which is in direct conflict with the practice of many Christians who insist on dedicating some of their sons to a life of celibacy, as if the heavenly Father despised the human species.[124]

To shun extremes is to escape serious danger. In dispensing charity, generosity is a virtue, but reckless benevolence, no less than abject stinginess, is a vice. And so, too, in the treatment of the senses; self-mortification, no less than self-indulgence, imperils the integrity of the soul.[125] The Torah by whose teachings we live, is singularly free from capriciousness and inordinate exaction. It directs our steps along the pathway of moderation and sanity, envisaging the perfect man as the pure soul housed in the sound body.[126] And we can realize this image of our possibilities only when we live the simple life. It may be natural for us, constituted as we are, to crave the luxuries and superfluities of life, yet nothing will so surely hamper our higher development, blurring the very purpose of our human existence, as this pursuit after the non-essential.[127] In hankering after the needless and the useless, as we do when we spend our energies in amassing great wealth,

[122] נצבים, p. 180a; שמיני, p. 98a. [123] נצבים, p. 174b.
[124] לך לך, p. 15a. [125] ויצא, p. 28b.
[126] שמיני, p. 97; בלק, p. 145b. [127] לך לך, p. 15a.

we deliberately forgo the quest of those things that are indispensable to the growth of the soul and thus abandon the ways of living prescribed in the Torah.[128] To strive to be holy, our main vocation in this world, can have no other meaning than that we train this body of ours, with its extravagant desires and low ambitions, to choose on all occasions the *middle of the road* and follow it without turning to the right or to the left.[129] For the spirit of holiness will not reside in a soul that is debauched; and since the chief aim of our religious discipline is to guard us against those practices which may bar holiness from gaining admission into our lives, we will vigorously resist the unwholesome influences of our environment. We will avoid those places which resound with boisterous hilarity, where strong drink and lewd song conspire to inflame the passions. We will also refrain from such amusements as the dancing-floor and the gaming-table may afford. Though nowhere specifically forbidden, these forms of entertainment are surcharged with menace to the life of the spirit. They lead to the excessive indulgence of the senses, and are therefore incompatible with the law of holiness.[130]

It is just here that we discover the nature and purpose of our distinctiveness in the world. We have been chosen from among all the nations that we might by the strictest supervision over the clamorous flesh, attain unto that purity of life which is akin to the divine, and thus sanctify God's name among men. For, as non-Jewish authors have so well phrased

[128] וישב, p. 34a.—It is interesting to note that while Anatoli, together with the doctrine of moderation, teaches the wisdom of contentment, as expressed in his striking aphorism: If a man cannot get what he wants, he ought to want what he can get (כי כאשר לא יזדמן לאדם מה שיחפוץ, יחפוץ במה שיזדמן לו—מטות, p. 152b), he nevertheless counsels young men not to enter the state of matrimony until they have the wherewithal to support a family—תזריע, p. 101a.

[129] שמיני, p. 99a.

[130] נשא, p. 126b; בהר, p. 110b.

it, while the Greeks courted wisdom and the Romans power, we, the Jewish people, have dedicated our lives to the cause of religion.[131] By entrusting us with the Torah, God has placed us in a privileged position, even as by endowing man with superior qualities, He has crowned the human race with a glory denied to other creatures.[132] Of course, we are not so foolish and arrogant as to claim that we alone possess a portion of God's spirit. We shall not fall into the error of those supercilious non-Jews who insist that they alone breathe the breath divine, and that the Jew has no soul. We believe that the image of God is indelibly stamped upon all men.[133] Yet we cannot help affirming that of all religions, Judaism is best calculated to lead the masses of men into the ways of right living. Christianity, with all it has learned from Judaism, by swerving from the *middle path* toward all sorts of extreme doctrines, has become unsuitable for men's needs. Mohammedanism, with its inferior ethical outlook, and its most unedifying picture of the heavenly bliss reserved for the righteous, can surely aspire to no equal rank with Judaism.[134] Hence, what constitutes our superiority and demonstrates the special love God has for Israel, since our status as men rises no higher than that accorded to other human beings, must be solely the excellence of the Torah placed in our keeping. Should we not, therefore, be assiduous in the study and observance of its laws and principles, so as to become truly worthy of the great privilege bestowed on us?[135]

[131] קדושים, p. 103b. [132] צו, p. 94a. [133] תולדות, p. 25b.

[134] בשלח, p. 58b—Yet, despite the superior excellence he claims for Judaism, he takes occasion to discourage proselytism. Conversion to Judaism, he says, with prevailing conditions as they are, is too perilous an undertaking. Should a non-Jew wish to adopt Judaism, we ought to counsel him to defer the step until such time as when changed conditions will make it possible for him to swear allegiance to our faith without incurring any danger. In the meantime, he should be urged to abide faithfully by the seven Noachian laws (נח, p. 12a). [135] תולדות, p. 25b.

Special privilege spells increased responsibility. The Levites belonged to a select group, hence the additional services they had to render. When through God's favor we dwelt in our own land, the religious obligations imposed on us outnumbered our present duties. Few, indeed, are the tasks laid upon us today by the requirements of our faith. It behooves us, therefore, to redouble our zeal in the performance of our prescribed duties. If the sacrificial cult no longer claims our devotion, let us intensify our enthusiasm for prayer. If we can no longer make pilgrimage to the holy Temple, let us hasten our steps to the Synagogue. If Jerusalem is beyond the range of our vision, let us fix our gaze upon the heavenly Jerusalem.[136] Above all, let us not surrender our distinctiveness by merging with other peoples and thus lose our individuality and the instinct for Jewish solidarity.[137] Though dispersed among the nations of the earth, we have not been rejected nor forsaken by God. The days of our destiny are not over. Despair must not be allowed to paralyze our faith in the ultimate redemption of Israel. We are being purified in the crucible of sorrow and struggle, and in God's own time we shall emerge from the bitter experience purged and strengthened, a remnant fit for the great work of human salvation.[138]

5

The earliest medieval homilist whose sermons have been preserved in their original form, Jacob Anatoli occupies a position of singular importance in the history and evolution of Jewish preaching. Whether, and to what extent, his method and spirit influenced subsequent masters of the homily, we have no way of ascertaining. Preachers, as a rule, are not accustomed to acknowledge their indebtedness to

[136] בהר, p. 109b, 110b; אמור, p. 107a.
[137] לך לך, p. 16a.
[138] צו, p. 97a; במדבר, p. 116a.

fellow craftsmen. But in his מלמד we shall find most of the salient characteristics of the later medieval sermon. The allegorical method of textual interpretation, which Anatoli had learned from Maimonides, and used so extensively; the practical insistence that the best thought of the day as well as the hallowed truth of the past inform the homily of the preacher; the intense concentration on the eternal themes of religion, in which profundity of insight and rare spiritual sensibility disclose their power and charm; the all-absorbing passion to make the ideals of religion dominate the hearts of men, of which the words of castigation and loving admonition are both sign and promise,—all these striking features of the מלמד we clearly discern in the outstanding homiletical efforts of ensuing centuries. To be sure, structurally, the sermons of Anatoli exhibit deficiencies which only a more fully-developed pulpit technique could adequately supply. Unmistakable offspring of the philosophical school and style, they share the qualities of the elaborate, written discourse, and are marked neither by the sure approach of the popular address nor by the force and simplicity of the spoken word. But while lacking in directness and also in effectiveness as pulpit utterances, in all the indispensable ingredients of homiletical composition these sermons reveal an excellence and a quality of permanence of truly classical caliber.

III.

BAḤYA BEN ASHER

A Practical Mystic

I

THE life-story of Baḥya ben Asher resolves itself into a brief record of his literary activity. He was born in Saragossa, Spain, about the middle of the thirteenth century, and followed the vocation of preacher in his native city; where, too, in 1340, he died, rich in years and in varied achievements. Of his personal life and relations little is known, excepting the few stray details we come upon in his writings. Thus, we learn that his grandfather was a man of erudition;[1] that Solomon ben Abraham Adret was his teacher;[2] and that hardship and sore distress were his daily portion.[3] Of his accomplishments and literary labors, however, much more is known. We know, for example, that despite the poverty and ceaseless distractions which saddened his days and consumed most of his leisure, he succeeded in becoming one of the most learned men of his time. His mastery in the various fields of Jewish learning is truly amazing.[4] Even more

[1] ביאור על התורה, בהעלותך, p. 190a, Amsterdam, 1726–ל"ז א"א מפי.

[2] He quotes from Adret (1235–1310) quite often and always refers to him as מורי הרב הגדול—ביאור, תולדות, p. 42a; בא, p. 88b; חקת, p. 206a; ואתחנן, p. 223a; etc.

[3] ביאור, הקדמה.

[4] Aside from making free use in his works of the talmudic *halaḥa* and *agada;* of the various midrashim, including such lost midrashim as מדרש חדשי (ביאור, שמות, p. 72b), מדרש ויושע (בשלח, p. 91a), מדרש סידורו של עולם (קרח, p. 199a), מדרש אבכיר (אבל, כד הקמח, p. 15, Warsaw, 1878); and of the well-known exegetes and commentators, such as Ḥananeel, Rashi, Naḥmanides, Ibn Ezra, Kimḥi, Jonah Gerondi, and the like; he also refers to, and makes frequent

astounding is his familiarity with many branches of secular knowledge, such as foreign languages,[5] the popular sciences,[6] and Greek philosophy.[7] His own works, though few in number, won him great fame, if they brought him no fortune. His Commentary to the Pentateuch, which he seems to have completed in 1291[8], received almost instant recognition, and through the centuries has continued to number among the most popular of biblical commentaries. His volume of sermons, bearing the title of כד הקמח, "The Jar of Flour," followed his Commentary,[9] and obtained equal favor with

---

adaptations from, the works of Saadia (ביאור, לך לך, p. 25b), Baḥya Ibn Pakuda (כה"ק, יחוד השם, pp. 82–83), Halevi (נר חנוכה, p. 113), Maimonides (ביאור, בראשית, p. 12b; צו, p. 149b; כה"ק, סוכה, p. 120), Ibn Tibbon (ביאור, ויצא, p. 43b), and a host of lesser authorities.

[5] He knew Arabic quite well, well enough to give a passage from an Arabic work in his own translation (ביאור, שופטים, p. 242a—העתקתיו משפת הגרי אל שפה ברורה היא שפת לשון הקודש). In a number of places, to make clear the meaning of a difficult Hebrew word, he gives its Arabic equivalent (ביאור, תצוה, p. 123a; ויקרא, p. 141b), its Latin and Persian equivalents (תשא, p. 126a), also the Greek and the Spanish (קרח, p. 199a).

[6] He frequently refers to medical theories (בראשית, p. 9b; שמיני, p. 153b; חקת, p. 204b), to works on Astronomy and Astrology (ויקהל, p. 137a; ויצא, p. 45b), and to various studies in natural phenomena (תצוה, p. 122b; צו p. 149b).

[7] בראשית, p. 12b; תזריע, p. 155a; תצוה, p. 123a, wherein he quotes from the "Book of Stones" of Aristotle, which exists only in manuscript form (Steinschneider Hebr. Uebersetzungen, p. 240, par. 127—see Bernstein, p. 38). He also made use of the works of Averroes (נח, p. 22a).

[8] In the very opening pages of the Commentary, the year in which the early chapters were being composed is definitely indicated, when the author states: בראשית—יום ששי כנגדו האלף הששי שיש לנו היום חמשים ואחת שנה, p. 11a. This would place the commencement of the work in 1291. However, toward the close of the book, there occurs a similar reference indicative of the exact date of its composition, when the author observes: ויש לנו היום נ"א לפרט היצירה—ראה, p. 237b, thus making the concluding as well as the opening parts of the voluminous work fall within the year 1291, a most unlikely feat. The probabilities are that the work was finished in 1291, and that in the final copy of the manuscript the author himself harmonized the dates.

[9] There are distinct references to the Commentary in these sermons, as when he says: ברכה—כבר הזכרתיו בפירוש התורה במקומו, p. 33.

posterity. A short treatise, entitled שלחן של ארבע, and composed of four chapters, the first three of which deal with the various meals and their attendant religious requirements, while the fourth treats of the banquet reserved for the righteous in the world to come, completes the list of his works definitely known to us and still extant.[10]

2

While the primary purpose of synagogal preaching has always been to interpret and elucidate scriptural truth, the function of the pulpit, all through the later stages in the sermon's growth, was never deemed fulfilled when only textual material, however skilfully woven, made up the fabric of the preacher's homily. In a religion like Judaism, a religion of

[10] In his Commentary, he refers to a book of his, presumably on the nature of prophecy, entitled חשן משפט (ואין להאריך בכאן כי כבר הזכרתי כל זה בארוכה בס' וזאת הברכה—חשן משפט, p. 265a). But the work seems to have been lost.

A commentary to Job, published by Meir of Hamburg, Amsterdam, 1768, and bearing the title of שובע שמחות, is not a new and independent work, though it may well have Baḥya's name affixed to it. It is the reproduction of an expository sermon taken by the publisher from the כה"ק (השגחה, pp. 55–65), and adapted to the text of Job as a running commentary (see Bela Bernstein: "Die Schrifterklaerung des Bachja ben Ascher ibn Chalâwa und ihre Quellen," p. 15, Berlin, 1891).

An attempt has been made to establish the claim that the ספר האמונה והבטחון now ascribed to Naḥmanides, is really a product of Baḥya's pen. Jacob Reifmann, who first advanced this claim in his תולדות רבנו בחיי בעל הפירוש על התורה (המגיד, 1861, p. 222), cites a number of passages from this book which bear striking resemblance to those in Baḥya's works. Bela Bernstein accepts the evidence as decisive and lists the book among Baḥya's writings (Die Schrifterklaerung, pp. 7–9). However, in view of the extensive use Baḥya made of the works of Naḥmanides, the evidence produced by Reifmann, while apparently supporting his contention, is far from conclusive. Besides, only the first chapter of the book in question suggests the relevancy of the title and abounds in echoes from Baḥya on the same theme, a theme, by the way, that receives fuller and more expert treatment in Baḥya's sermon (כה"ק, בטחון, pp. 26–29), while the other twenty-five chapters deal with a species of kabbalistic exegesis decidedly in the manner of Naḥmanides.

law and traditional observance, the popular teacher could not confine himself solely to the task of exposition without endangering the position of the Book as a guide to daily conduct. Literature is a form of art, helpful to life; religion is the art of right-living, the very essence of life. "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation"[11]—was the way the Psalmist defined his influence as teacher. To the early preachers, even Moses, the legislator, did not seem to regard his task as finished when the ordinances of the Lord had been proclaimed to the people. The appointed seasons of the Lord, he learned soon enough, had to be declared unto the children of Israel at appointed times. Each occasion, as it came round, demanded instruction in the laws governing its proper observance.[12] Thus, the need of selecting timely themes for pulpit discourse received, it would seem, from Moses its imperious nature.[13] To be sure, whatever the objective of the individual preacher, the chosen text required immediate and adequate interpretation; but the homiletical material, supplied by the scriptural lesson and rabbinical sources, formed only the background of the preacher's work. Ethical and religious truth, no less than ritual law, in most instances derived from the text but not infrequently superimposed upon the text, stood in the forefront of the preacher's consciousness as he expounded the weekly lesson, even as it sooner or later made its way into the foreground of the simplest homily.

Scriptural preaching, beset by many difficulties to the uninitiate, rears no barriers to the free expression of the profoundest views and thoughts, once the technique is thoroughly mastered. Jewish homilists never quarreled with their tools; they subdued them to their own uses by acts of glad

[11] Ps. 40,10. [12] Sifra, אמור, chap. 17.
[13] Meg. 3a; Yalkut, ויקהל, sec. 408.

submission. If the assigned scriptural reading tended to restrict the choice of texts for any given occasion, the proem with its extraneous text opened up new fields for homiletical exploration. If the Haftarah held no vision of a broader prospect, the Agada with its many-sided views offered the wider vista sought. The thought of the preacher, the message he meant to bring to his people, may have had elsewhere its setting, though always within the realm of Jewish ideas, beliefs, and practices; yet, when expressed or adumbrated in the text, it gained in cogency, in authority, and in luster. The preacher used the text, even as the astronomer uses the telescope, to bring the distant near, and thus give "to airy nothing a local habitation and a name."

This felicitous method of pulpit instruction, which served to combine urgent religious information with textual exposition, enabled the preacher to disseminate Jewish knowledge of great diversity while probing the depth of individual texts. Homiletical exegesis thus became the vehicle of popular education in Jewish thought and Jewish duty. The masses of the people, to whom the sources of Judaism were inaccessible, received ritual and ethical guidance, as well as spiritual elevation, while they listened intently to the homilies of the preacher.

Yet this method, apt and effective as a pedagogical device though it proved to be in most instances, brought in its train some unexpected perils and difficulties. The excessive emphasis laid on homiletical exegesis resulted not infrequently in a marked attenuation of the thought and message of the preacher. In some cases, it actually drained the sermon of its real substance and strength, and left nothing but an elaborate scaffolding to overawe a bewildered posterity. The wide latitude the method afforded the individual preacher seemed to encourage the unrestricted indulgence of

personal propensities, so that a mind engrossed in exegesis could exercise its bent to the full with little or no regard for the higher purposes of the pulpit. Textual interpretation, meant to be only the starting-point of the sermon, became in unskilled and unsteady hands its destined goal as well, thus divesting the synagogal discourse of its more vital function and influence. Of course, the representative Jewish preachers of the Middle Ages had no difficulty in preserving their mental equilibrium and sense of proportion; they seem to have maintained a well-balanced relation between the tools they used and the ends they sought. But the peculiar homiletical method they had to employ precluded the possibility of drawing a sharp line of demarcation between the two elements. The truth propounded, the lesson taught, is clear and unmistakable; but it lies so deeply embedded in the homiletical structure that to dissever the one from the other must result in injury to both. In other words, the very excellence of the technique militates against the effective separation of the divers materials used.

To overcome the difficulty inherent in the method, as well as guard against the peril lurking in the execution, Baḥya ben Asher, whose unique contribution to Jewish homiletics will engage our attention in this chapter, appears to have devised a very simple but most effective plan. The plan, as it stands revealed to us in the uniform character of his published sermons, consists in placing at the core of the sermon some great religious principle, or duty, or any important aspect of it. The undeviating regularity with which Baḥya prosecutes the plan may well be taken to enunciate a fixed conviction on the part of the preacher, that not a general idea, however profound and significant, not an individual scriptural text, however rich in homiletical possibilities, but a fundamental Jewish doctrine or practice, must form the theme and the

body of the sermon preached. To be sure, biblical texts and rabbinical statements, the standard materials of the Jewish sermon, could never renounce their claim on the preacher's time and effort; they constitute the indispensable ingredients of the synagogal discourse. But the task confronting the preacher, Baḥya seems to insist, calls for something more than the marshalling of ancient texts and their more modern interpretations. The traditional material thus mobilized must be directed toward a definite objective, and so arrayed as to supply a specific religious tenet or obligation with all the reality, clarity, and moral compulsion of stubborn truth. Thus conceived and executed, the sermon ceases to be the impressive performance of a skilled artisan and becomes the earnest pursuit of the devoted teacher of religion.

3

The כד הקמח, which exemplifies Baḥya's theory of preaching, comprises sixty sermons, corresponding in number to the essential religious principles and duties that must control our conduct in life.[14] The sermons deal with a variety of subjects, mostly pertaining to faith and worship, to ethical qualities and obligations, to holy days and other solemn occasions, and to the most common ritual laws and practices;[15] and are arranged in alphabetical order so as to facilitate the reader's search of a theme suitable to his mood.[16] That the sermons

[14] הקדמה.

[15] We may perhaps best classify the themes of these sermons by grouping them under three main headings: 1. Principles and practices of a theological nature, such as Faith in God, Love of God, Providence, Piety, Prayer, Repentance, and the like; 2. Ethical duties, such as Charity, Justice, Hospitality, Humility, Respect for Parents, Respect for Public Opinion, and the like; 3. Ritual requirements, such as those associated with the Sabbath and Festivals, as well as those ceremonial institutions which symbolize Jewish distinctiveness, as circumcision, the *mezuzah*, the *fringes*, the *phylacteries*, and the like. [16] הקדמה.

were actually preached before congregational assemblies, admits of no doubt. "Israel's teachers," says Baḥya in the introduction to one of his sermons, "whenever they preached in public, opened their sermons with a biblical text, which became the foundation of the structure they reared . . . It behooves me, therefore, to expound the scriptural verse with which I have begun."[17] "And if a descendant of Aaron," he reasons in another sermon, "who wears the crown of the priesthood, is yet subject to the wishes of the congregation and must stand in awe of the public will, how much more is it true that one who does not belong to the priesthood, yea, a plain Israelite like myself, *facing you* this day, ought to pay deference to the congregation and address it only with its consent."[18] "May the Holy One," he fervently prays in the concluding words of still another sermon, "purify us from our sin and make us worthy of the life in the world to come by forgiving us *on this* Day of Atonement all our sins, in accordance with His own promise."[19]

With only few exceptions,[20] these sermons are short, simple, and forceful. Baḥya's theory of preaching included among its elementary prescriptions the practical insistence that the preacher shall respect his audience, that he shall prepare his sermon with meticulous care, and that in the expression of his ideas he shall strive for the utmost brevity. "In the light of Solomon's admonition," he observes on one occasion, "that a

[17] כה'ק, גזל, p. 37. [18] *Ibid.* רשות, p. 158. [19] *Ibid.* כפורים, p. 95.

[20] The exceptions arise whenever the preacher, to illustrate the thought of the sermon and give it dramatic vividness, chooses to expound a whole biblical book, or some significant part of it. In his sermon on Providence, for example, he gives an elaborate exposition of the Book of Job (pp. 56–65), following the interpretation of Naḥmanides; in his sermon on Atonement, he expounds the Book of Jonah, after the manner of Abraham ben Ḥiyya in his הניון הנפש (See note כפורים in Ḥayyim Breit's edition, Lemberg, 1880); and in his sermon on פורים, he interprets the Book of Esther in his own way, first literally and then allegorically (פורים, pp. 144–149).

man should plan beforehand what he is going to say or do, no matter how great his native intelligence or acquired wisdom may be, it becomes only too evident that a man of limited understanding like myself ought to give careful thought to what he proposes to say. In fact, had I considered the matter more fully, the consciousness of my meagre attainments would have deterred me from addressing you at all, especially those among you who are my undoubted superiors in wisdom."[21] There is, of course, much wisdom in the high appraisal put upon public speaking. As concerns the speaker, the benefits accruing from the enterprise are considerable indeed. He receives nothing but praise when he speaks wisely and well; and many are his teachers, only too eager to offer correction, when he stumbles into error. But this privilege, it is wisdom's own counsel, must not be abused by indulging in speeches of unmeasured length. "Even when in his public address he aims to convey religious instruction, it is incumbent upon the speaker to be deliberate, rather than impetuous, in his utterances, and, above all, to be content with but few words. Such is the respect one owes to a congregation."[22] Well indeed have ethical teachers spoken, when they said: "If speech is silver, silence is gold."[23]

It is not to be presumed, however, that this self-imposed discipline of the preacher is designed to curb his passion for the right, to make him cautious and calculating in the presence of injustice and wrong, to fill him with so much deference and awe as he faces his congregation that he will be unable to muster enough courage to smite corruption and reprove the sinful. Nothing could be farther from Baḥya's plan and purpose. He accepts unhesitatingly the rabbinic pronouncement that one may use slanderous words against contentious

[21] *Ibid.* רשות, p. 160. [22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid.* p. 161.

men,[24] and that he who refrains from battling against those whose conduct is reprehensible, must share with them their guilt.[25] He also urges upon his listeners the wisdom of welcoming words of criticism and rebuke from the pulpit, and quotes approvingly the dictum of an old teacher,[26] that evil will loosen its grip, and contentment and bliss will be freely bestowed, on a society which spurns not exhortation and reproof.[27] Only those steeped in sensuality and contemptuous of rational thought, he contends, will remain unresponsive to persuasion's plea, lacking, as they do, the necessary equipment for such appreciation and response.[28] Nor did Baḥya's own practice in the pulpit belie the fervor of his professions. While chiefly devoted to the task of propounding the great mandates of Judaism in all their ramifications, he never shunned the duty of raising his voice in vigorous protest against any of the evils and perversions that seemed to infest his own community. With much courage and indignation, he inveighed against the cupidity of the rich who would rather commit perjury than bear their proportionate share of the communal tax. "The impecunious among us," he cries bitterly, "who are destitute and heavily burdened give their very life-blood to meet the assessment, while the churlish rich, with a heart devoid of faith in God, seeks to fill his coffers by despoiling the poor and the needy, to reduce the weight of his burden by shifting the load to the shoulders of the impoverished, the orphaned, and the widowed . . . Do you wonder why the evasion of the communal tax does not bring fit punishment upon the head of the guilty as soon as the guilt is disclosed? Why the earth does not open its mouth to swallow him, even as it did unto Korah and his followers? Remem-

[24] T. J. Peah, 16a.
[25] כה"ק, לשון הרע, p. 97.
[26] Tamid, 28a.
[27] כה"ק, שנאת חנם, p. 124.
[28] ביאור, לך לך, p. 24a.

ber, God is extremely long-suffering; He bides His time."[29]

With equal ardor, he pleaded with his people to respect the authority of Jewish law and condemned those members of the community who took their grievances to the civil courts. "Any Jew," he stated emphatically, "who resorts to a civil court, thus evidencing greater esteem for secular law than for divine legislation, is guilty of profaning God's name . . . For a Jew to refuse to submit to the legal decisions of the Torah and choose to abide instead by the verdict of alien courts, is to proclaim his abandonment of the belief in divine authority . . . It is a fact generally recognized that the religious doctrines and legal statutes of the nations are but the *interest* accruing from the Torah, while Jewish laws and decrees constitute the *principal*, the original capital, so to speak, of the Torah. To ignore these laws is to mock their Maker. And those who, having the power to combat such a practice, are yet content to sit idly by and leave the duty undone, lay themselves open to the charge of disrelishing the Mosaic law, of paying homage to foreign institutions, and even of compassing the financial ruin of one of the litigants. Verily, they will answer for this neglect of their duty!"[30]

No less outspoken in his criticism was Baḥya on those occasions when he sought to enforce proper observance of traditional rites and practices. He grievously lamented the fact that some of his contemporaries made light of such a time-honored rite as the laying of *phylacteries* during the morning worship. "There are those," he complained, "who have grown lax in the performance of this religious duty.

[29] כה"ק, גזל, pp. 39–40.

[30] *Ibid.* דינין, p. 25, Lemberg, 1858—In the Warsaw edition, 1878, which is used for reference in this study, the passages here rendered are not given, having doubtlessly been deleted by the Russian censor. The original composition, however, is faithfully reproduced in the Lemberg edition, 1858, as well as in Ḥayyim Breit's edition, Lemberg, 1880.

They disregard the practice because they are under the impression that, since the use of the *phylacteries* calls for a physical and mental state of exceptional purity and holiness, they could not be considered fit for such an exacting exercise. But they err in their reasoning and thus fall unwittingly into sinfulness. Surely, the Scroll of the Law is vastly more sacred than the phylacteries, and yet any Jew may be called to read from it and none is deemed unfit for the task. . . . It is therefore imperative that this rite become more prevalent in Israel. In past ages, all Jews strictly observed this and similar rites. It was not until persecution arose and our strength began to dwindle, not until cruel decrees imposed physical punishment on the faithful observer, that Israel began to neglect this practice."[31] His language grew even more bold when he ventured to criticize members of the community who openly profaned the holy Sabbath. "Having shown," he concludes his sermon on that theme, "the great virtue that resides in Sabbath observance, how all the precepts associated with it, be their meaning simple or mysterious, point to the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge, we think it quite proper to stir up a feeling of deep concern and distress over the abominable situation in our midst. There are Jews who violate the laws governing the proper observance of the Sabbath, and the judicial powers of the community keep their eyes closed. They refuse to lift the rod of correction, which alone might subdue these rebellious fellows. What a shameful, what a humiliating, what a wrath-provoking truth it is, that there are men in Israel who profane the Sabbath in the sight of all men! . . . And when we note how scrupulously the non-Jews observe their festivals, while Jews disregard theirs, although *theirs* bear the designation of the 'seasons of the Lord,' then we perceive that the

[31] *Ibid.* תפלין, pp. 197–198.

profanation is not only of the Sabbath but of God's name as well. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the judicial body to invoke its disciplinary powers and devise fit penalties for those who dare profane the Sabbath."[32] In similar vein, Baḥya spoke against "those who, when they enter the synagogue to pray, bring with them a frivolous spirit. They talk aloud as if they were standing in the thoroughfares of the city, and give vent to their perverse impulses as if totally unaware of the sacredness of the place."[33] True faith demands, he asserted, that "one shall concentrate all his power of thought on the liturgical responses, and not appear to be deaf and dumb while the 'messenger of the congregation' reads the prayers, and, above all, not engage in idle talk with his neighbor, in the manner of a chance encounter in the street, as some of our people are in the habit of doing."[34]

The sermons give overwhelming evidence of Baḥya's alertness and courage when faced by menacing situations. Yet, not to criticize and censure, but to enlighten and edify, was the primary aim of his preaching. The staple of his pulpit utterances was instruction, positive, constructive, helpful guidance in matters of religious belief and practice. In fact, it was Baḥya's conviction that knowledge of Judaism and faithful adherence to its teachings offered the only sure remedy for the spiritual ailments of his generation. "Anyone," he averred, "who endeavors to fathom the depths of the Torah, will not be long in realizing the power there is in the light that streams forth from the Scriptures to dissipate all darkness and thus put on a firm basis the products of the intellect as well as the practical affairs of life."[35] "For the light

[32] *Ibid.* שבת, p. 176.—The last sentence in the quotation is not found in the Warsaw edition; the censor evidently objected to its inclusion in the text. It is taken from the Lemberg edition, 1858, p. 89b, and reads as follows: ולכך ראוי לב"ד להניף יד ומקל מוסרם לא ישיבו ריקם לשלם למחללי שבתות כפעלם אל חיקם.

[33] *Ibid.* בה"כ, p. 35. [34] *Ibid.* אמונה, p. 7. [35] *Ibid.* שבועות, p. 186.

of the Torah," he further affirmed, "exceeds in power that of the heavenly luminaries. Hence, to escape from the darkness in which the things of nature envelope him, a man can find no other device than that which the Torah and its commandments afford."[36] He bemoans, therefore, the sad fact that most people, "devote all their time to vain things, and have no fixed periods for study, neither on week-days nor on the Sabbath and Holy Days. Of course, each is ready with his excuse: one has too much wealth, and hence too little leisure; another suffers want and must hustle for his daily bread. Meanwhile, the study of the Torah is neglected."[37] To overcome this evil, he advocated a more intense effort to educate the child. "It is necessary," he urged vigorously, "that the heads of the community become interested in education, that they endeavor to enroll all children in the religious school. This is a fundamental truth in education: where there are no kids (young students) there will be no wethers (scholars). Education must begin with the young . . . The communal leaders in every city must make it their duty to prosecute this task, or be guilty of a serious offense."[38]

The religious instruction Baḥya sought to give to his people was, naturally, cast into the traditional homiletical mould. Ideas are presented and developed by means of luminous texts. Biblical verses and rabbinical statements carry the thought of the preacher forward, deepening and strengthening it. The initial text, not necessarily from the Pentateuch,[39] suggests, but never exhausts, the main theme.

[36] *Ibid.* תורה, p. 186. [37] *Ibid.* p. 187. [38] *Ibid.* p. 192.

[39] Only a few of the sermons, ten in number, revolve around pentateuchal texts. The other sermons, forming the bulk of the volume, derive their texts from other parts of the Bible: from Isaiah, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, and Ecclesiastes. It must not be assumed though, that in his weekly sermon Baḥya ignored the scriptural lesson. The sermons in this volume doubtlessly represent the best efforts of a man whose pulpit career extended over a very

Accordingly, homiletical exegesis, in its widest and most varied uses, serves to build up the framework of the sermon, even as it supplies us with incontestable evidence of the preacher's interpretative power. That Baḥya borrowed much of this exegetical material from earlier commentators, is quite evident. In most cases, he indicates the sources used. Where a specific reference to the original source is lacking, we are provided with the needed information by the author himself when, for example, in the Introduction to his Commentary he tells us that in determining the plain meaning of the scriptural text he follows such authorities as Rashi and Ḥananeel; that in his kabbalistic interpretations he bases himself on the works of Moses ben Naḥman; and that for the material used in the introductory homilies, with which the individual pericopes begin, he is indebted to Jonah ben Abraham Gerondi.[40] Occasionally, in the sermons proper, we come upon an important passage the source of which is not given by the author but which can be traced to an older work, as Ḥayyim Breit repeatedly demonstrates.[41] But these occasions are few, and do not detract from the real merits of his own contribution. Baḥya quotes from others profusely, but he never surrenders his independent judgment. Again and again, he warns the reader not to accept uncritically the interpretations of well-known, authoritative commentators.[42] He crowds his discourses with ancient texts and comments, but the homiletical turn he gives to these venerated citations releases not infrequently an unexpected ray of light that il-

long period. As such, they constitute a species of occasional sermons. Besides, the predetermined plan of the author to present discourses on specific themes and in alphabetical sequence, made the unrestricted selection of texts imperative.

[40] ביאור, הקדמה.

[41] כה"ק, Ḥayyim Breit, editor, Lemberg, 1880.

[42] ביאור, בחקותי, p. 176b—ואל תהי נפתה בהבלי ר' אברהם האומר . . . ואלה דברי רוח.

lumines the thought and reveals the deeper significance of his theme. Indeed, in all his exegetical efforts, Baḥya is animated by but one desire, to foster a deeper insight into the ethical and spiritual truths of Judaism. He interprets texts, that he may thus inculcate principles and sentiments of holy living. Edification, not literary interpretation, is the primary goal of his labors. Even in his Commentary, he chooses to play the role of the preacher. "That my book," he says, in explaining the design of the work, "may include both instruction in the Law and ethical stimulation, I shall introduce every pericope with a homily on a verse from the book of delights . . . which is the Book of Proverbs."[43] Accordingly, a proem, deeply spiritual in tone, precedes the minute verbal analysis of the weekly portion, even as a succinct recapitulation, coupled with an earnest appeal, frequently concludes the textual criticism. Thus, at the close of one such detailed exposition, he makes the following remarks: "There is in this theme a very stirring lesson for men, namely, that all their deeds are evaluated in accordance with the principle of reward and punishment, and that they are destined to render a full account unto Him who spoke and the world came into being . . . Therefore, it is the duty of every man, a duty dictated by reason itself, to give much thought to the need of winning His favor and dreading His displeasure."[44]

In his exegesis, Baḥya employs four distinct methods of interpretation. According to the first method, the aim of the interpreter is to ascertain the plain meaning of the scriptural text. A word or phrase literally construed often fails to convey the sense intended. Surely, one does not depart from the פשט, the simple meaning, when he chooses to conceive of anthropomorphic expressions as mere adaptations to the con-

[43] הקדמה, ביאור.

[44] *Ibid.* וישב, p. 57b.

crete forms of human speech.[45] When the thought clearly intended is determined, the interpreter may find it profitable to delve into the works of the early expounders and endeavor to discover some suggestive comment in the light of which a given difficulty or obscurity may be dissolved. After having thus viewed the text in question על דרך המדרש, in the light of rabbinic exegesis, he may wish to impart to it a deeper significance by reading into it a thought of his own invention, that is, to examine its profounder possibilities על דרך השכל, from the philosophical point of view. Then, finally, there is the method by which the interpreter leaves the plane of the known and perceptible and ascends into the realm of the occult, where the highest truth abides,[46] a method, that is, that probes the deeper meaning of the text על דרך הקבלה, by invoking the mysteries of the Kabbalah.

While frequently Baḥya resorts to all the four methods in elucidating a single text, ordinarily he employs only two or three, in their divers permutations, never, however, failing to include, in its primary place, the פשט, or more obvious connotation. But whatever their number or disposition, the methods thus utilized hold distinct advantages. The interpretation rendered appears many-sided and complete. There is variety, challenge and stimulation in the effort of the expounder. Above all, there is something in the exposition to satisfy every taste and temper. We need but examine a typical example of his exegetical style to learn the secret of his popular appeal. The verse under consideration is from the Pentateuch and reads as follows: "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."[47] The enigmatic phrase is "of Thy book." In its plain sense, it may be taken to refer to the Book of the Law,

[45] בראשית, ביאור, 9a, 18b. [46] הקדמה.

[47] Ex. 32, 32.

in which case Moses begs leave to disassociate himself from the book that bears his name, that is, he declines to serve as intermediary between God and His people. If we choose to interpret the phrase in the light of rabbinic exegesis, we shall have to restrict the term "book" to a single pericope from which, contrary to expectation, Moses' name is actually excluded. There is a rabbinic passage which seeks to deduce from our phrase a truth of general import. "The imprecation of the sage," so runs the comment, "even when uttered conditionally, cannot fail of fulfilment. Moses had asked that his name be blotted out, if forgiveness for Israel were not forthcoming; yet, though Israel's sin was forgiven, the omission of Moses' name from the preceding pericope (תצוה) still stands."[48] Construed philosophically, the phrase may be taken to connote the heavenly constellations; for it is in the position and motions of the stars that we may read man's nature and destiny.[49] To be blotted out of this book divine must mean to break contact with the heavenly bodies, which determine life's span and nurture our vital powers, and therefore cease to be. Then, finally, the biblical word מספרך, which yields us the difficult phrase, lends itself also to a kabbalistic interpretation. Phonetically, the word may well point to the doctrine of the "spheres." According to the teachings of the Kabbalah, the world of phenomena is constructed and controlled by certain divine emanations, designated as "spheres." What

[48] זהר, פנחס, p. 246a, Lublin, 1882; זהר חדש, שה"ש, p. 120, Warsaw, 1884.

[49] In common with most Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages, Baḥya professed the belief that the position of the stars at the moment of birth determined the vicissitudes of a man's life (כי חיי האדם נגזרים—ויחי, ביאור, p. 65b הם כפי משפט המערכה). But he also voiced the belief that planetary influences, while real, lacked finality; that God's will transcended the power of the stars and had dominion over them (אע"פ שכח המזלות נדול—ראש השנה, כ"הק, p. 169 מאד ושהם פועלים פעולותיהם .... הנה יש עליהם כח עליון הוא כח הש"ת); that, moreover, it is given to man, by the sheer power of prayer, to nullify their decree (כי התפלה מבטלת הנגזר במערכת הכוכבים—תפלה, p. 192).

Moses, therefore, asks is that his being be removed from the very mould of existence.[50]

Yet this diversity in interpretation, which lends much interest and charm to his Commentary, we encounter in his formal sermons only occasionally. As a rule, the exegesis in his public addresses is more simple and, in many instances, also more penetrating. The philosophical method is used but infrequently, and whenever invoked, it partakes of the nature of allegorical interpretation. Thus, the characters and events sketched in the Book of Esther may be conceived by the philosophical mind as representing the eternal struggle between the two kinds of planetary forces, the good and the evil, for the absolute control of our human destiny.[51] Thus, too, the structural design of the Succah, as prescribed for the Feast of Tabernacles, may be said to symbolize, if we adopt the philosophical manner, the narrow confines of this world together with the spaciousness and illumination of the world to come.[52] Nor is the kabbalistic method of interpretation employed with greater frequency in these sermons. In fact, Baḥya deemed it undesirable to impart to the masses a knowl-

[50] ביאור, תשא, p. 130a. [51] פוריים, p. 148.

[52] סוכה, p. 119—Baḥya shows a distinct predilection for symbolism, even though he designates its use as "philosophical" but infrequently. Thus, in the Tabernacle, the Menorah and the Table stood opposite each other (Ex. 26, 35) to indicate that wisdom, symbolized by the Menorah, depends for its growth upon the satisfaction of our physical wants, as represented by the Table and the showbread, and that, conversely, without wisdom there can be no material well-being (חנן, p. 78). Again, after Haman's execution, we are told (Es. 8, 2), the King Ahasuerus presented Mordecai with the ring he had taken from Haman, thus foreshadowing the ultimate turn of the wheel of fortune, fittingly symbolized by the circular shape of the ring, in favor of Israel, when the power of Edom shall be broken and Israel's glory restored (פוריים, p. 149). Likewise, the process of removing all leaven from one's premises on the day preceding the Feast of Passover, finds its exact counterpart in the steps one must take to purge his soul of all evil inclinations—the "leaven" of the heart (פסח, p. 136).

edge of those mystical notions and implications which though inherent in the scriptural text could not but elude the grasp of the ordinary intelligence.[53] Only in the Commentary, which was presumably intended for the special student, does he venture to disclose those mysteries he fain would conceal from the great mass.[54] In the כד הקמח, therefore, we shall find that the bulk of Baḥya's exegesis consists only of such homiletical turns as are calculated to reveal the inner force and beauty of the biblical text, in addition to supplying us with its more evident meaning.

To compass this end, the preacher has recourse to a number of well-known, though distinctively used, methods of textual interpretation. At times, by redefining a single word in the given text, he succeeds in transforming its whole context. Thus, for example, the verse: "The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast,"[55] expresses a thought clear enough as it stands; yet, by slightly altering the vocalization of the verb,[56] we gather the truth, somewhat more profound homiletically, that the righteous man holds under strict control the beastly nature that is within him.[57] In like manner, the verse: "He kisseth the lips that giveth a right answer,"[58] expresses, rather vaguely, a commonplace thought, until we recall that the Hebrew word for "lip," in its original signification, denotes "edge" or "border," and that to kiss may be used figuratively, in the sense of touching closely, or cleaving to something; in which case, the declaration of the author that he

[53] ביאור, ויקהל, p. 136a—שאין לגלות ענינים נסתרים בהמון; האזינו, p. 262b—כי התורה נתנה להמון ודעת ההמון לא יכילו הענינים השכליים; see also כה׳ק, לולב, p. 100; סוכה, p. 117; שבת, p. 176.

[54] בשלח, p. 97a—והנני מגלה סוד אשר הסתירו חכמי האמת ב׳ג סעודות וארמזנו לך בכאן.

[55] Prov. 12, 10.

[56] In its *Hiphil* form ידע may signify to teach, to rule, to subdue, to discipline, as in Jud. 8, 16—וידע בהם אנשי סוכות.

[57] הכנעה, p. 53. [58] Prov. 24, 26.

who gives a right answer, whose habit it is to weigh carefully every decision and utterance, is skirting the rim of man's highest ideals, gains in clarity, in depth, and force.[59]

More often, it is the accepted meaning of a word or phrase that the preacher scans closely, to discover a connotation of greater depth and significance. The text: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,"[60] for example, lends itself to no other interpretation than the one commonly approved; yet, the injunction to love God with the whole heart is manifestly too indefinite to follow. It is only when we contemplate the fact that the heart is the first of our physical organs to open the portals of life and the last to close the windows of experience, that we begin to perceive the practical importance of the legislator's behest: one should love the Lord, his God, from the hour of birth to the very moment of death.[61] Similarly, the text: "But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it,"[62] while clear in expression, appears too vague for practical guidance. Yet a deeper study of the emphatic words in the statement will make it evident that we are dealing here not with superficial rhetorical phrases but rather with a most comprehensive summary of the vital teachings of Judaism. For Judaism may be said to comprise three main divisions. There is, in the first place, that set of duties the fulfilment of which depends on the *mouth*, the use of human speech, such as the obligation to study Torah, to pray, and to recite prescribed formulae. Then, there are those doctrines which find their fulfilment in the *heart*, such as faith in God, love of God, and kindred duties of the heart. And, finally, there are those principles and precepts which lay upon us the obligation to *do*. There are the ceremonies to be observed, and the ethical

[59] אהבה, p. 10.
[60] Deut. 6, 5.
[61] אהבה, p. 9.
[62] Deut. 30, 14.

tasks to be performed. Now, all these salient features of our religion are clearly stressed in the text, thus revealing a richer content than appears on the surface.[63]

Then, as a third species of exegesis, Baḥya occasionally employs the familiar device of shifting the accentuation, with much syntactical freedom, so as to alter radically the thought of the sentence. Thus, for example, the original text: מי יודע רוח בני האדם העולה היא למעלה ורוח הבהמה היורדת היא למטה לארץ[64] which, with all its faulty syntax, seems to raise the question whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes downward, is by a definite change in accentuation made to read: מי יודע רוח בני האדם, who knows, or can fathom, the spirit of man, which goes upward, and the spirit of the beast, which goes downward to the earth?—thus removing a very difficult theological question, though breaking at the same time the rhythmic flow of the writer's thought.[65] Of course, when the suggested change is made necessary by an evident collision with an established doctrine, this species of exegesis, however forced, carries with it the justification of self-defence. But one's tolerance is put to great strain when not the exigency of credal vindication, but the passion for originality, dictates the arbitrary reading. Thus, when Baḥya proposes that in the prophetic pronouncement: "Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and they that return of her with righteousness,"[66] the accentuation of the thought be changed so as to yield the sense that it is only just that Zion, free from guilt, should be redeemed, while the redemption of its converts must await a special act of righteousness or charitable judgment on the part of God,[67] we are less impressed with the brilliancy, and more with the futility, of the exegesis.

Finally, there is the method of exposition by which Baḥya

[63] שבועות, p. 179. [64] Eccl. 3, 21. [65] אבל, כה"ק, p. 18.
[66] Isa. 1, 27. [67] דינין, כה"ק, p. 51.

achieves some of his most alluring effects. It is a method that is replete with surprises, and consists of the adroit conversion of simple words into elliptical expressions of singular appropriateness. Thus, the text: "But he that hateth gifts shall live,"[68] is interpreted to mean that he who has learned to be content with his meagre earnings, proud of his own efforts and reluctant to receive gifts from others, shall live *without such gifts*, shall be able to maintain his independent existence and have no need of subsidies from other sources.[69] Likewise, the verse: "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt have bread in plenty,"[70] presents a difficulty which only the assumption of an ellipsis can solve. It is easy to see that one who loves sleep may become impoverished, but it is not quite so evident that all one has to do to have bread in plenty is to keep his eyes open. But, says Baḥya, "open thine eyes" is used here elliptically, which, with the omissions restored, would read: "Open thine eyes *to the truth of the above admonition*: '*Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty*,' and thou shalt have bread in plenty." In other words, when one has recognized, and determined to avoid, the chief cause of poverty, self-indulgent indolence, he will be on the road to prosperity.[71]

These various ways of textual interpretation, however, while characteristic of Baḥya's exegetical style, portray but imperfectly the commanding position of scriptural truth and rabbinical lore in the framework of his sermon. The materials from these authoritative sources, arranged in orderly fashion and reproduced with little or no comment, serve to buttress and render impregnable every single point made by the preacher. Of course, to one unfamiliar with this type of defence, or unimpressed with the conclusive character of the

[68] Prov. 15, 27.
[69] חמדה, כה'ק, p. 74.
[70] Prov. 20, 13.
[71] חמדה, כה'ק, p. 74.

evidence, the thought of the preacher would seem to lie buried beneath an avalanche of citations of great sweep if not of overwhelming power. And, indeed, in hands less steady and skilful, the result would be disastrous. Many a medieval preacher, who sought to emulate the method without possessing the vision, the consecration, and the craftsmanship requisite for the task, set out on the perilous venture with much disordered erudition and no definite destination, only to become lost in a maze of complicated quotations and unintelligible observations. But in Baḥya's manner and method, once we recognize the incontestable validity of the sources used, we shall find little that is either aimless or confusing. Citation follows citation in great profusion, but the outline of the thought stands out clear and sharp, always. The ideas of the preacher, as they unfold, receive reenforcement from the great reservoir of Jewish thought, but they retain their identity and unity of organization. Denuded of all authoritative support, they could still stand their ground, if not conquer as readily the deadly inertia of a bland acquiescence. In fact, Baḥya seems bent not so much on proving his contentions true as on rendering his convictions inviolable. The truth he exalts is sacred truth; the duties he urges are time-honored and persistent. Hence, the evidence he adduces from the ancient sources is generally couched in the simple, familiar, self-explanatory pronouncements of seer and sage. From these statements, faithfully reproduced and, when necessary, adequately expounded,[72] he means to derive support

[72] The rabbinic statements, so often cited, seldom receive any special expository treatment. They are given, in full or in part, only as additional evidence of the soundness of the preacher's views. Occasionally, however, a brief comment follows the quotation, suggesting a novel construction of a single word or the intent of the whole; and, invariably, the proposed deviation from the commonly accepted definition or purport, adds fresh significance to the thought of the passage. Thus, for example, the rabbinic dictum:

for his argument, justification for the vehemence of his plea, and, above all, sufficient motive-power for the active obedience he hopefully anticipates.

Yet Baḥya's reliance on the cumulative effect of proof from authority accounts only for a portion, even though it be the major portion, of the biblical and rabbinical material he uses so extensively. A considerable number of these citations seem to serve no other purpose than that of clarifying the thought of the preacher. They refer to situations, or reflect facets of ideas, strikingly similar to those under discussion. They illustrate his observations and mode of reasoning, rather than prove the truth of his conclusions. As such, they form part, not of the body of evidence, which fortifies the message, but of the means of presentation, which illumines and amplifies the theme. For Baḥya addresses himself to the imagination as well as to the reason, or, as is the case in many instances, to the reason through the imagination. The points he sets out to prove, he illustrates therefore with parallel thoughts from the religious literature of the past, no less than with the facts of personal experience and observation, thus enlivening the argument with apt quotation and impressive analogy.

"Proselytes are as bad for Israel, as a sore on the skin" (Yeb. 109b), Baḥya construes in a sense denoting condemnation of Israel rather than disparagement of the proselyte: the eagerness of the stranger to join the faith constitutes a severe indictment of the original recipient of the Torah, who persists in his lukewarmness to its mandates (גר, p. 45). Again, the declaration of a noted teacher that "all the commandments were bestowed upon Israel in the open, excepting the Sabbath which was given in secret" (Bez. 16a), seems devoid of all meaning, since the institution of the Sabbath rests on one of the Ten Commandments, which were admittedly promulgated at Sinai for all the nations of the earth. But in the statement before us, Baḥya suggests, it is not the manner of transmission that the author aims to describe and differentiate, but rather the degree of accessibility: the Sabbath is still veiled in mystery, its inner nature and many of its requirements bear the seal of secrecy; all the other commandments, on the other hand, present nothing that is abstruse or baffling to the intelligence (מילה, p. 104).

Baḥya's illustrations, then, are of two kinds: those of literary origin, drawn from the most familiar of Jewish sources, and those essentially pictorial in nature, limned on the canvas of life itself. Of the former, little need be said, except that in the choice of material he exercises fine discrimination, and in the grouping, much care and skill. Invariably, the passages cited contain nuances of thought he himself seeks to express. The latter species, while not as numerous, possesses for us greater appeal, since it exemplifies some of the best qualities of his literary style, a style which, in many respects, is unique in the homiletical literature of the Middle Ages. The simplicity and purity of the diction are matched only by the clearness of the thought and the directness of the message. In conciseness and lucidity of expression, even as in the popular character of the instruction, these sermons approximate the classical Agada at its best. In fact, one may trace the simple virtues of Baḥya's style to the influence of the early synagogal homilies. That other influences, too, especially those emanating from the literary currents of the day, moulded his thought and expression, admits of no doubt. The sermons in which theological questions are discussed, indicate the full extent of his indebtedness to the philosophical style. Yet, only in the argumentative sermons, or in the dialectic portion of the sermon, do we encounter evidences of his dependence on later literary patterns. The explanatory sermons, or the illustrative parts of the sermon, bear the stamp of an earlier model, one with which the Midrash has made us familiar. There is much force and beauty in the illustrations taken from life, not unlike the simplicity and charm of midrashic analogies and parables. Thus, for example, to demonstrate the folly of assuming that chance, and not divine purpose, controls the vicissitudes of life, Baḥya makes the luminous observation that "he who ascribes these things to mere accident must find

himself in the position of the bird: it sees the net spread out before it, but deems it of no special purpose; chance, it fondly imagines, and not the hunter bent on game, placed it there."[73] Or, to enforce the claim that one must make good what one has despoiled, while yet among the living, and not rely on posthumous restoration, he draws a graphic parallel from the proper use of candle-light: "The light of a candle is serviceable to man only when it precedes him on the way; it will be of no use to him when it is made to trail behind him."[74]

Again, the influence of material riches on character and conduct is variable; money will brighten some lives, and darken others. "It is like the sun, which produces effects of striking contrasts: it bleaches the linen, but tans the face of the laundress."[75] Or, to cite a more elaborate example, there is a close relationship between the material and the spiritual. Often the material is the road leading to the spiritual. "It is in the nature of the child, for example, to do his lesson only when father and mother have satisfied his craving for sweets. To him sweetmeats are of greater worth than the study of Torah. As he grows older, he loses his high regard for dainties, and will do his studies only when provided with clothes that adorn the body, thus placing a higher estimate on dress than on study. But as he advances in years and begins to realize that the garments one wears play but a minor role, he turns to his studies that he may win fame and glory, that he may receive titles of honor and occupy a conspicuous position among his fellows. It is only when his intelligence has sufficiently ripened to perceive the vanity of glory and the emptiness of pleasure, that the religious motive makes itself felt in his studies, yea, in all his ambitions and enterprises, so that he can say with the Psalmist: 'Lord, all my desire is before

[73] מטר, p. 106. [74] גולה, p. 37.
[75] ביאור, בחקותי, p. 174.

Thee."[76] Thus, we see him rise to a high spiritual level by means of material inducements."[77]

When Baḥya has thus presented the various aspects of his thought, he frequently gathers up its practical implications and shapes them into a timely plea for devotion to duty. In most such instances, the sermon concludes with the appeal, as, for example, in the sermon on "Insincerity," which includes among its concluding words the following sentences: "Since insincerity makes man an abomination in the sight of God, one ought to shun the practice, guarding his lips from the profanation that would designate the wicked as just and the just as wicked. One should see to it that the words he utters are well-founded and true, and that all his deeds are done in faithfulness and uprightness. It is wholeness of character that invests man with immortality, and bestows upon him the privilege of direct communion with God."[78] At times, however, the appeal occurs, not at the close, but in the body, of the sermon, as a fitting conclusion to the exposition of an important phase of the general theme. Thus, in his sermon on "Purim," after expatiating on the nature and power of the loving-kindness of God, and before proceeding with his detailed interpretation of the events the feast commemorates, he pauses long enough to remark that "inasmuch as this exalted and mighty attribute guides and preserves all being, it is incumbent upon everyone to think constantly and make repeated mention of the many kindnesses of God, . . . be it of His goodness toward Israel when He delivered the people from the hand of Pharaoh, . . . or of the mercy He showed unto them at this time (Purim) when He rescued their very

[76] Ps. 38, 10.

[77] חחן, p. 77—This illustration may have been suggested to him by his namesake Baḥya ben Joseph (see חובת הלבבות, שער הבטחון, ch. 4), but he received only the seed; the full-blown flower is a product of his own mind.

[78] חנופה, p. 71.

lives from destruction."[79] But whether the admonition is diffused through the sermon or concentrated at the end, it forms an integral part of the preacher's purpose, which is none other than to confirm the faith and principles of Judaism in the life and conduct of the Jew.

4

A volume of sermons like the כד הקמח, in which every discourse revolves around some fundamental Jewish doctrine or practice, will of necessity yield to the reader a comprehensive view of the aims and objectives of Judaism. Indeed, it is as a manual of religious instruction that Baḥya's homiletical work has enjoyed widest popularity through these many centuries. What the Jew should believe, and what he must do to attest to that belief, is perhaps nowhere else so clearly and impressively stated, in popular homiletical form.

Baḥya, in whose simple style we noted distinct echoes from the early Agada, stands out in these sermons as the most authentic voice of early rabbinic Judaism. He speaks the language, he manifests the spirit and intuitive insight, of the classical exponents of the ancient faith. Above all, in his conception of the integrity of Judaism, the absolute oneness of its religious discipline, and in his concentration on the single task of making life divine, he rises to the original source of Jewish thought and inspiration.

While Judaism, resting on a definite theological foundation and prescribing clearly-defined duties, would seem to lend itself to but little diversity in exposition, the great preachers of the Middle Ages succeeded none the less in stamping their unique personalities upon the pages of their sermons. To the casual reader, familiar with the aims and distinctive institutions of Judaism but loath to scan closely the homiletical

[79] פורים, p. 144.

products of a remote past, these celebrated teachers of religion might well appear to be playing upon the same instrument the same old melodies. And, indeed, they all had but one message to bring, one set of doctrines to expound, one fixed code, ritual or ethical, to urge upon their listeners. Yet in their respective utterances as preserved for us, the careful student will not fail to discern a strikingly individual method of approach, a new grouping of old ideas, yea, a fresh appraisal of standard values.

Baḥya's exposition of Judaism rests in the main on two theological principles: the belief that the world came into being by the creative will of God, and the conviction that God is One. From the fact of creation he deduces fullest attestation of the divine origin of the Law. For, he contends, the idea of creation necessitates the belief in Providence, namely, that God watches over the things He has made; the notion of Providence presupposes the existence of good and evil, which, in turn, makes the moral guidance as embodied in the Torah indispensable and, hence, indisputably divine.[80] From the chief attribute of God, which is His unity, he derives man's higher affinity, the evidence of his exalted nature, the vision of his true destiny. While among the principles of faith the belief in the existence of God is primary,[81] among the doctrines of the Torah, which aim to fashion the religious life of man, the teaching of God's unity is supreme.[82] Now, this principle of unity, we find, operates also in the world of nature and of man. Nothing that is, exists for itself and by itself. There is an invisible chain that binds all things together. Man's being, while only part of the larger realm of existence, reproduces within its own circumscribed sphere that whole process by which the various elements and forces

[80] בראשית, p. 3b; אמונה, p. 5.
[81] מציאות השם, p. 101.
[82] לולב, p. 99.

of nature work harmoniously together to achieve one common end.[83] Thus, the essential unity of all things, everywhere so plainly manifest, confirms the divine character of the world, moulded as it is in God's own likeness, and suggests the chief task as well as native possibilities of man.

To discover these possibilities and ascertain the nature of this task, we need only consider the fact that while the physical functions and powers of man are well coordinated, each organ working in perfect unison with the other, the inner life of man is devoid of unity and harmony. The soul of man is the battle-ground of many forces; evil desires and passions perpetually contend with the nobler impulses of the heart. Man's soul, it would seem, while doubtlessly a single entity, the opinions of some thinkers to the contrary notwithstanding, houses within its sacred precincts imperious wants and cravings of unequal rank and promise. It is these conflicting longings that would destroy the unity of the soul. To banish disunion and strife from our inner life, the divine Law issues the clear mandate that all the baser passions be subjugated and brought under the sovereign rule of the nobler aspirations, under the absolute control of the rational powers of the soul.[84]

But how shall this end be achieved? The Torah which imposes the task does not leave us to groan under the burden unaided. It provides us with a detailed plan, charting every path to follow and every pitfall to avoid. That many of these instructions and specifications find their parallels in the philosophical writings of other peoples, yea, have their origin and sanction in the common-sense thinking of all nations, the most primitive among them, only helps to confirm the universal character of the religious ideal;[85] it does not discredit

[83] בראשית, p. 10a. [84] תענית, pp. 195–196.
[85] אמונה, p. 7; גזלה, p. 35.

our claim that the Torah is the supreme expression of God's will. Secular wisdom contains much "honey," but there is too much "wax" in its composition.[86] It is this extraneous matter that vitiates the quality of its finer ingredients and presents a real menace to religious truth.[87] Besides, all the "branches" of knowledge grow out of one divine "root," which is the Torah.[88] Every science helpful to man, such as astronomy, medicine, and the like, is distinctly referred to in scriptural and rabbinical books.[89] No one who delves deep into the Scriptures will fail to reach the realization that all worldly wisdom lies hidden among the other treasures.[90] Of course, the wisdom of the philosophers is not to be despised. The work of reason and investigation will prove very beneficial if it be kept within the legitimate boundaries of the human intellect. There are aspects of the deity and of the divine soul within man which can be grasped only by one whose mind penetrates into the innermost recesses of pure thought.[91] But the mental capacity of man is limited; to transgress its bounds can result only in confusion and error.[92] In those remoter regions, where the light of reason never shines, the Torah alone may be trusted to guide our steps aright. Surely, if spiritual health is our goal, and purity and holiness our desired possessions, we shall look for help to no other source than the Torah and its life-encompassing discipline.[93]

The Torah, which comprises the complete plan of harmonious living, opens quite appropriately with a clear account of God's work in the world and the manner of His dealing with His creatures. We cannot by searching find God; the essence of His being must forever remain baffling to the

[86] בראשית, p. 3. [87] נצבים, p. 257a.
[88] אבל, p. 15; בראשית, p. 11b. [89] סוכה, pp. 120–121.
[90] שבועות, p. 186. [91] אבל, p. 21.
[92] פקודי, p. 137b. [93] כפור, p. 93.

human understanding. But we are privileged to witness the ceaseless march of His power and goodness. Our vision, for example, wavers and retreats at the first onset of the blazing sun; its fierce glow blinds our sight. Yet wherever we gaze we behold the manifold blessings wrought by the dazzling rays of the beneficent sun.[94] Hence, for us to know God must mean to have knowledge of the nature of His ways, and to love and serve Him must mean to strive to pattern our lives after His qualities.[95] Faith in God is more than an intellectual affirmation of a theological truth; it is primarily the soul's joyous surrender to an ethical principle. Faith is faithfulness, faithfulness in all our human relationships. To be faithless to man in any of our dealings with him is to have no faith in God.[96] Fear of God is more than a premonition of the dread consequences of one's misconduct; it is essentially such an overwhelming sense of the power and glory of God as must fill the soul with awe, with reverence, with humility, in the presence of which the impulse toward evil cannot but vanish.[97] Love of God is more than a pious sentiment which seeks expression in acts of homage and words of adoration; it is chiefly that loyal attachment to one's visions and tasks which will spare neither earthly substance nor life itself to maintain their reality and power.[98] When in the very first commandment God chooses to describe himself as "the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt," He means to make it known to us that not in the work of creation but in the act of human redemption lies His chief glory.[99] Accordingly, to stand for justice and live by it scrupulously and steadily, is to join a profession in which God himself is busily engaged.[100] To breathe the spirit of truth in all our activities,

[94] ברכה, p. 30; חשא, p. 130b. [95] שבועות, p. 180.
[96] אמונה, pp. 6–7; גזל, p. 37. [97] יראה, p. 82.
[98] וירא, p. 34a; אהבה, p. 8. [99] צדקה, p. 152. [100] דינין, p. 51.

is to rise to the very source of truth, to the One true God, and thus attain unto life eternal.[101] To be humble in our relations with men; to be modest, patient, and forbearing; to practise sincerity and shun hypocrisy,—this is to walk in God's ways and possess His spirit.[102] Would we, then, come nigh unto God and share in His likeness? We must live true to the principles of right conduct as formulated in His Law.[103] This is the service of God that has in it the power to subdue the rebellious desires of our lower nature, and thus restore unity and harmony within our souls.[104]

With oneness of soul as our chief goal, with the One God as our supreme pattern, and with the Torah as our unfailing light, we are adequately equipped for the consummation of our main task in the world. But, like all enterprises of great importance and long duration, the pursuit of the religious ideal, too, requires for the successful prosecution of its major plans not only determination and concentrated effort but also proper perspective and steady stimulation. It calls for the

[101] אמונה, p. 6.—From stray expressions in his ethical sermons, one might be led to infer that Baḥya's conception of immortality and life after death lacked definiteness and concreteness; that it partook more of the ethereal and poetic nature, betokening a high elevation of the spirit, a mystic union with God. Such an inference would be entirely unwarranted. As theologian, Baḥya insisted on the fundamental character of the belief in immortality and in the reality of the world to come, and deprecated the tendency in some quarters to allegorize the rabbinic descriptions of the future state (שלחן של ארבע, Portal 4, p. 220). He discovers in the Bible clear intimations of the rabbinic "Garden of Eden" which is reserved for the righteous in the future world, and parries the query: why the promised rewards for obedience consist of immediate material blessings? with the simple assertion that the Bible addresses itself to the great heterogeneous mass which is incapable of being won to a life of obedience by remote prospects and insubstantial gains (*Ibid.* p. 222). When soaring to mystic heights, however, as he does in many of his finer passages, his ethical fervor seems to soften his theological rigidities.

[102] ענוה, p. 129; לך לך, p. 28b; חנופה, p. 70.

[103] שבועות, p. 182.

[104] יצר הרע, p. 86.

cultivation of a sense of proportion, a well-balanced view of relative values, and for the conservation of the inner resources of strength and enthusiasm. It demands of the devotee that he adopt sane attitudes and pursue exhilarating practices. In a word, it prescribes a definite outlook and atmosphere, a particular disposition and discipline. As to the first condition, the need of perspective, while Judaism has always envisaged life as a unified whole, in which all things essential to man's existence play an important part, it has with equal penetration and emphasis discriminated between the great and the small, the high and the low, the end and the means. Soul and body are indispensable to each other, but their functions are not identical; the latter is the instrument in the hands of the former.[105] To be sure, the body is the "garment" of the soul;[106] yea, it is the "temple" of the soul;[107] it therefore cannot but be impregnated with the sanctity and purposefulness of the spirit with which it is in constant and intimate association.[108] But the great importance of the body must not blind us to the fact that in the joint enterprise it fulfills a subordinate function. The material is the vehicle of the spiritual; it is not an end in itself. The body, therefore, must be kept fit and ready for the furtherance of the higher purposes of the soul.[109] And it is because of the great service it may thus render the spirit in its upward ascent, that the natural and necessary functions of the body lose their low animal character and

[105] עצרת, p. 125; שש"א, P. 4, p. 221. [106] *Ibid.* [107] זנות, p. 68.

[108] בית הכנסת, p. 34.—Baḥya is so deeply impressed with the dignity and inherent worth of the physical side of our nature, that he refuses to subscribe to a belief in immortality from which the notion of bodily resurrection is excluded. It is inconceivable, he argues, that the body which made it possible for the soul to attain unto greater spiritual perfection should be abandoned to decay and dissolution with no hope of future restoration. Shall we believe that the justice of God stops short of the physical frame of man, ignoring its rightful claim to recognition and recompense?—שש"א, P. 4, p. 221.

[109] בא, p. 83a.

assume their exalted station among the consecrated agents that minister to God's glory.[110] On the other hand, to pamper the body, to put no restraints upon the appetite, to labor for the superfluous and be drawn after the pleasurable, is to crowd out the soul, is, in fact, to destroy the whole personality.[111]

As for the second requirement, the need of frequent spiritual stimulation, the religious discipline the Torah prescribes is as effective as it is comprehensive. It proposes, in the main, to set the life of the individual within an atmosphere most conducive to the infiltration of faith and the cultivation of character. The ritual laws and traditional practices, insofar as they seek to control and restrain the clamorous flesh, promise to rescue the spirit from enslavement to lower aims and thus set it free for the reception of divine truth.[112] That physical conditions and surroundings may help or hinder the growth of the soul, we can entertain little doubt. We know, for example, that certain foods tend to refine, while certain other foods tend to coarsen, the nature of man. If city folks can boast of greater refinement than peasants possess, it is largely because they subsist on a daintier diet.[113] And so, our dietary laws, in designating some victuals as clean and others as unclean, aim to restrict us to such meat and drink as will keep the body strong and the spirit tender and kind.[114] On the other hand, we know that our urban centers, rather than the rural districts, are infested with grave social vices, and that, therefore, to live the simple life, away from society, is to escape many a snare.[115] It is no mere coincidence that so many of our great leaders and teachers engaged in the humble occupation of the shepherd: to tend to the flock in the solitari-

[110] עצרת, p. 125.
[111] שש"א, P. I, p. 208; זנות, p. 69.
[112] שמיני, p. 154a.
[113] שש"א, P. II, p. 217.
[114] פסח, p. 136.
[115] וינש, p. 64b.

ness of the plain is to see less of man and more of God.[116] Social intercourse exposes us not only to the evil influence of the tale-bearer and the slanderer but also to the less injurious but equally undesirable incitements of those who indulge in frivolous amusements and seductive song.[117] Our time-honored discipline, therefore, in seeking to guard us against all these temptations and distractions, bids us hold in light esteem the pleasures and pastimes of this earth, that we may pursue only those joys and satisfactions which come from the faithful performance of our religious duties.[118]

Nor is this discipline confined to prohibitions and abstentions; primarily, it operates in the realm of ideas and beliefs. Abstract truths, to become fixed convictions and gain ascendancy over life and character, must needs assume concrete forms. Action alone, even if it be symbolic action, can make mental images and impressions real, firm, and vivid.[119] Hence the numerous institutions and ceremonial objects encircling the life of the Jew: they strike the eye, engage the hand, and thus fix the heart of the man of faith. The Sabbath day with its impressive observances reiterates from week to week, yea, from day to day,[120] the essential truth that the world came into being by the creative power of God; the *Mezuzah*, fastened conspicuously to the door-post, speaks to us, as nothing else could so pointedly, of God's providence and His ceaseless care of the life of the individual; the phy-

[116] *Ibid.* [117] זנות, p. 69.

[118] שמחה, pp. 116–117. [119] תפלין, p. 197.

[120] Baḥya makes the shrewd observation that the reason why the Jewish calendar, unlike the calendars of other nations, numbers the days of the week instead of naming them, is none other than the deliberate wish that the term "sabbath," which in Hebrew signifies "week" as well as rest from labor, shall be associated in our daily speech with every week-day. Thus, when we speak of the first day of the Sabbath, the second day of the Sabbath, and so forth, we are with no conscious effort fulfilling the very letter of the commandment to "remember the Sabbath day."—שבת, p. 173.

lacteries, stamped with the seal of God's unity, repeatedly proclaim to Israel his unique relation to God.[121] Likewise, the various blessings we pronounce over the food we eat and the beverages we drink serve the very necessary purpose of diverting our thought from the appeasement of the senses and directing it instead to the contemplation of the Dispenser of all our gifts and comforts.[122] Even the prayers we utter so frequently and the forms of self-denial we practice at stated intervals have no other design than to implant humility in the soul by most palpable means, thus training the bodily organs to submit to the authority of the higher faculties and join with them in the joyous service of God.[123]

[121] תפלין, p. 197; מזוזה, pp. 102–103; שבת, p. 173.

[122] ברכה, p. 30; שש"א, P. 1, p. 214.

[123] תענית, pp. 196–197; הכנעה, p. 53; כפורים, p. 94.—His penetrating insight into the deeper purpose of religious rites and ceremonies, often prompted Baḥya to search for the symbolic significance of purely local customs. He commends highly the custom, prevalent at one time among men of prominence in Spain and apparently then still current among the very pious in France, of utilizing the boards of the house table in the construction of a casket for the remains of the deceased. This custom, says Baḥya, is fraught with deepest meaning, bodying forth, as it does, the simple but important truth that only the hospitality, the many kindnesses, a man has dispensed among those around his table will follow him into the grave.

There are two references to this custom. In one, Baḥya speaks of it as an old Spanish practice no longer in vogue: והנה באזנינו שמענו ורבים ספרו לנו בגדולים שבספרד . . . שנהגו מנהג נכבד מאוד (שש"א, P. 1, p. 208), while in the other, he refers to it as a current French practice: ומנהג חסידים שבצרפת שעושים משלחנם ארון לקבורה (תרומה, p. 119a). He also approves the practice, then current in some Jewish communities, of breaking a glass at festive gatherings of a religious character,—a custom that is still practiced only at weddings. This act, says Baḥya, accords well with the implied admonition of the Psalmist: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2, 11. —לפיכך יש מנהג—בקצת קהלות ישראל במקום השמחות וסעודות של מצוה לשבר שם כלי זכוכית שש"א, P. 1, p. 207).

He condemns it, however, as superstitious, as something very much akin to magic, when one refrains from performing a given task on a certain day lest ill-fortune befall him; though, by the most tenuous of distinctions, he finds

Such is the nature and purpose of Israel's Law. It is a unified system of thought and action. It embraces the whole of life and seeks to minister to the whole man. The Jew who complies with its mandates will necessarily live a life that will set him apart from the members of other nations, and may even incite hate in those who envy him his spiritual advantages.[124] For the Torah, which constitutes Israel's glory, has crowned him with the title of "friend of God," a title which the other nations, having spurned His Law, have clearly forfeited.[125] Nor has Israel proved himself unworthy of the peculiar position assigned to him. All through the centuries of his exile, he has clung tenaciously to the fundamental teachings of his religion, despite the repeated attempts of his enemies to coerce him into the acceptance of another faith.[126] At this very moment, the Jew evinces a power of faith unparalleled among other groups: he sees his ancient land exploited by strangers, overrun with pagans and infidels, while he must live in lands of oppression, away from all the sources of his happiness, and yet resolutely refuses to abandon the hope that God will restore him to his former glories.[127] A people that is capable of such superb faith cannot but be essential to the stability of civilization. In fact, Israel's survival in the world attests not so much to his vitality as to his indispensability. Other nations have completely disappeared from the arena of life. Israel alone has remained. Of course, he, too, had incurred guilt and merited chastisement; but exile, not extinction, was the divine punishment meted out to him. Is it not evident that in the mind of God Israel's existence is bound up with the welfare of the human race?[128] To be sure,

in favor of the popular custom to place one's wedding-day in that portion of the month when the moon is full (מזוזה, p. 103).

[124] קדושים, p. 167b. [125] בא, p. 85a. [126] אמונה, p. 5.
[127] *Ibid.* [128] גאולה, p. 45.

nations, unable to fathom God's purposes, often take counsel together to devise ways of destroying us, but all their devices must come to naught since they go counter to the will of God.[129] Israel is eternal; like the burning bush, though fires rage all about him, he shall not be consumed.[130] Yes, we are scattered among the nations and subject to many a bitter trial, but we have not surrendered the hope of restoration, nor have we lost sight of the opportunity afforded us to foster the spirit of true faith in the lands of our dispersion.[131]

The Jew, therefore, whose trust is in God and to whom the utterances of the prophets are sources of inspiration, will never permit himself to fall victim to despair.[132] He will bear the burdens put upon him, upheld by the conviction that all these trials are meant for his own good, and will pray to God that He may grant him the strength to endure his afflictions with patience and dignity.[133] Assured of God's love, he will dedicate his powers to the task of religion, ever loving and serving God; for His love is all-absorbing and satisfying, and His service is perfect freedom.[134] Above all, he will unite with all his brethren and act in harmony with them, thus affirming his faith that as God is one and His law is one so is Israel one, of one heart and one will.[135]

5

In the field of Jewish homiletics, in which Baḥya's labors principally fall, few works have attained greater popularity, and exerted more benign and potent influence, than the כד הקמח. Through the centuries, it has proved to be a veritable "Jar of Flour," from which many a hungry soul drew nour-

[129] שמות, p. 72b. [130] *Ibid.* p. 74. [131] גאולה, p. 46; ציצית, p. 153.
[132] *Ibid.* [133] חנוכה, p. 115.
[134] אהבה, p. 10; גאולה, p. 50; ראה, p. 236a—כי עבודתו הוא החירות האמתי.
[135] שנאת חנם, p. 121.

ishment and strength. To the popular teacher, ever on the alert for more effective methods of presentation and communication, it opened new avenues of approach and imparted deeper insight into the true nature of religious instruction. It brought him fresh evidence of the sure power of the spoken word, when substance is wedded to simplicity, and intensity of purpose radiant with purity of character. To the ordinary student of Torah, always eager for the knowledge that enlightens and edifies, it unlocked the secret chambers of a soul impregnated with religious ideas and aflame with the spirit of God. For Baḥya's chief contribution, his most enduring influence, came not from his mind but from his heart and soul. The spirit that pervades his sermons proclaims him the man of God so unmistakably that one often wonders whether it is not the saintliness of Baḥya, rather than his homiletical power, that compels our homage and moulds our judgment. At all events, what is spiritually precious is imperishable; and sermons, vocal with the spirit of a living personality, may grow old but cannot die.

IV.

ISAAC ARAMA

The Preacher's Preacher

I

WHEN we contrast the persistent popularity of the earliest synagogal homily with the widespread disfavor encountered by the medieval sermon, we cannot escape the conviction that it is love of simplicity, as well as veneration of the old, that controls the literary taste of classical students. Surely, if substance and form determine the quality of a composition, the pulpit discourses of the representative preachers of the Middle Ages excel, both in thought and structure, the most felicitous of midrashic homilies. But fertile invention and ingenious construction cannot successfully vie for popular favor with the natural grace and forcefulness of single ideas simply expressed. The medieval sermon is too elaborate to invite the attention, and too involved to hold the interest, of the most curious reader. It has depth and variety and much noble sentiment, but its cumbersome framework and intricate content present a forbidding aspect hard to conquer.

Yet the complex nature of the products of our later preachers, however unpalatable to our modern taste, mirrors most faithfully the conditions and tasks that confronted the leaders of the Synagogue during those trying centuries. The desperate struggle for survival made life for the Jew not only a solemn but also a most complicated enterprise. The hostile environment into which his lot had been cast reduced the business of living to a ceaseless combat. To preserve himself, his life and

culture, he had to forge new weapons of defence, the very raw material for which he often had to import from foreign marts. For, the forces that threatened his existence, while not entirely new, had never before reached such prolonged concentration and unmitigated virulence. Nor did he seem to retain his old-time invulnerability. The steady impact of the non-Jewish environment on his religious discipline which hitherto had formed the surest safeguard against possible disintegration, began to show most alarming effects. Practical non-conformity became more frequent and more widespread. The revived learning of the ancient pagan world, just then in full process of filtering through the European mind, induced a closer examination of the accepted truths of his inherited faith. He began to analyze, to compare, to question. Then, too, an unregenerate Church, mercilessly bent upon the destruction of any soul that would not be saved by its prescribed methods, launched out upon its nefarious work, using persuasion, intimidation, coercion, and expulsion to make its power prevail. Thus, what with his own rooted love of imitation and natural susceptibility to new ideas and outlooks, and what with the vile machinations and brutal aggressions of an unholy Church, the Jew stood exposed to the subversive influences of an alien culture and to the unscrupulous missionary zeal of a tyrannical clergy.

To strengthen the moral fiber of the Jew; to implant in his soul an unconquerable will to live; to interpret the literature and doctrines of his people in the light of his newly-acquired knowledge; to enable him to distinguish between what was true and what was false in the teachings of pagan thinkers; to arm him against the cruel onslaughts of an intolerant Church —this became the supreme task of the contemporaneous pulpit. Such a vast undertaking called for a variety of powers in the preacher and for a most elaborate technique in the pres-

entation of the sermon. Assuming the multifarious functions of exegete and apologist; theologian and philosopher; teacher, interpreter, monitor; the preacher had to draw on numerous sources of knowledge, both Jewish and general, and employ diverse modes of expression. In a word, the magnitude of the task undertaken and the diversity of the materials used made for the undue complexity and elaborateness of the preacher's work. And, indeed, brevity and simplicity, which lent elegance and distinction to the early Agada, could serve but ill an age that stood in greater need of conviction and courage than the delights of literary charm.

Adjustment, apology, admonition—these, then, are the conspicuous threads that run through the web of the medieval Jewish sermon. The effort of the preacher is largely focused on the task of reconciling, wherever possible, the new truth with the old, of expounding and vindicating the ancient faith, and stirring the will to present action. The art of the preacher chiefly lies in so weaving his material that the biblical and rabbinical texts become the warp, and his own ideas and objectives the woof, of the homiletical fabric. This closeness of texture it is, in the main, that proves so discouraging, if not baffling, to those who would trace the diverse threads through the variegated pattern. Yet, once this initial obstacle or repugnance is overcome, the pattern thus disclosed, compact, symmetrical, colorful, could not but be viewed with delight and admiration. There is great beauty in the design and much excellence in the execution. Above all, there is an amazing comprehensiveness in the representation. The whole of Judaism, its inmost nature and accidental expressions, lies unfolded before our gaze. Indeed, the important branches of our literature, the vast library of religious thought and practice, one may find in the works of the outstanding medieval preachers, in epitome.

It was because of the loftiness of its aims and the vastness of its scope that for the synagogal preachers of subsequent generations the medieval sermon, despite its patent imperfections, became an indispensable source of instruction and inspiration. Even those of independent mind sought and found therein much of the material for their own homiletical structure. To those of more restricted capacity, it supplied form and substance, text and content. In fact, the utter lack of originality we note and deplore in so much of the old-time preaching of the latter-day pulpit, may in no small measure be due to the very richness and diversity of the homiletical materials fashioned by the masters of the Middle Ages. In the presence of such superabundance, the poor in talent and power, it would seem, could not but shrink from cultivating their own meagre resources, allowing the scanty plot of their inheritance to lie fallow that they might exploit all the more thoroughly the unbounded domains of their masters. Thus, by the potency of its influence, the medieval sermon has extended its being, so to speak, beyond the confines of its proper age, imposing its peculiar standard of belief and method of exposition on many a contemporary pulpit.

In turning our attention, therefore, to the sermons of Isaac Arama, from whose עקדת יצחק, more than from any other homiletical work of the Middle Ages, countless preachers through well-nigh half a millennium have drawn much of their thought and inspiration, we are not seeking to revive interest in a forgotten or neglected classic. To this very day, Arama may be said to persist as a living presence in many a Jewish pulpit. For homilists of the older style, his sermons are still bulging with unappropriated treasures. Hence, in entering upon the analysis of these sermons, we are rather attempting to trace to their source homiletical ideas and methods still current in the synagogal preaching of our day, and to deline-

ate a pattern of religious thought clearly stamped on the pages of the בעל עקדה and still recognized as the supreme pattern of traditional Judaism.

2

Isaac ben Moses Arama was born in northern Spain, probably in the city of Zamora, province of Leon, in the year 1420.[1] While the sources of our information concerning the details of his life are few and vague, it may be safely assumed that Arama, who as a young man presided over the Yeshiba at Zamora, received either from his father or at the local Hebrew schools an excellent talmudical training which doubtlessly paved the way for his later mastery in the various branches of Jewish literature.[2] It may also be assumed, in view of his later proficiency in departments of general learning,[3] that his early education was not lacking in the cus-

[1] תולדות ר״י ע, H. J. Pollak, עקדת יצחק, vol. I, Warsaw, 1904.

[2] His sermons abound in references to a large variety of literary works. He quotes copiously from the Talmud and the classical exegetes; from the Apocrypha (Ser. 105, p. 240); from the grammatical works of Ibn Janaḥ (Ser. 21, p. 239), Ibn Ezra and David Kimḥi (Ser. 2, p. 42); from the philosophical writings of Israeli (Ser. 3, p. 53), Crescas (Ser. 96, p. 101), Gersonides (Ser. 73, p. 26), and Albo (Ser. 80, p. 129), not to mention those of the "mighty lion," Moses Maimonides, whose *Guide* directs his steps at all times; from the *Travels* of Benjamin of Tudela (Ser. 33, p. 401); and from a host of ethical and scriptural interpreters.

[3] In his sermons he makes extensive use of the *Ethics* of Aristotle. In fact, it may be said to form one of the chief pillars in his temple of ideas. Occasionally, he refers to a Commentary of his own to this important work, which apparently never reached the stage of publication (Ser. 22, p. 245; Ser. 33, p. 395). He also refers to the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle (Ser. 10, p. 130), as well as to the celebrated commentators Averroes and Ibn Sina (יד אבשלום, chap. 5, p. 17b). At times he quotes from Plato (Ser. 35, p. 16; Ser. 73, p. 20), discusses the theories of Alexander Aphrodisias (Ser. 6, p. 85), speaks disparagingly of Manichaeism with its doctrine of dualism (Ser. 90, p. 41), and quotes from Algazali (מבא שערים, p. 22). He also shows familiarity with the rudiments of Anatomy (Ser. 49, p. 218) as well as with those of Astronomy (Ser. 48, p. 209; מבא שערים, p. 22). It may also be of interest to note that he makes mention of

tomary disciplines of the secular schools of his day. At all events, he spent his youth, as he tells us, in following the deepest longing of his soul, namely, to prepare himself thoroughly for the divine tasks of life.[4]

The first rabbinical post he filled lay in Aragon, city of Tarragona, on the Mediterranean coast. No sooner had he arrived there than he sought to organize a Yeshiba similar to the one he had left behind at Zamora. But his new community, heavily burdened with taxes, and unaccustomed to the sacrifice involved in the enterprise, was slow in providing the necessary means, so that the few students who had followed him to his new location soon found themselves without adequate subsistence and had to depart.[5] Deprived of the opportunity to foster learning in the young, Arama speedily turned his attention to a task proper to his office and most suited to his native endowments. With great energy and earnestness he set out to cultivate the art of preaching. The men of his congregation, he informs us, were clamoring for pulpit instruction. Attending church services as they did, or had to do,[6] they had learned to appreciate discourses of a contro-

a method to strengthen the memory, which he himself had devised after finding all the known methods inadequate for the purpose (Ser. 90, p. 38).

[4] הקדמת המחבר.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] It is generally accepted, and no doubt on good authority, that from the time of the apostate Paul (Solomon) Burgensis, and due to his machinations, Jews were compelled to attend church services and hear the sermons preached (דור דור ודורשיו, vol. V, p. 232). Arama, however, does not make it clear whether such attendance was voluntary or compulsory. He merely states that among the attendants there were also Jews who took delight in the utterances of the preachers (ובני ישראל באו בתוך הבאים ושמעו אמריהם כי נאמו—הקדמת המחבר). He also tells of a Christian preacher who spoke to large congregations, and to whose personal invitation some Jews responded with their presence (חכם אחד מחכמי הגוים בתוך דבריו אשר דבר במקהלות עם רב ובאזני קצת גוברין יהודאין אשר קרא לנו לשמוע מפיו דבר כמנהגם—חזות קשה, Portal 4, p. 10). Nowhere does he speak disapprovingly of this practice, either bemoaning the perilous exposure or censuring the

versial character. Among themselves, they often engaged in heated disputes and as often turned to the rabbi to settle some point at issue. This circumstance revealed to Arama the urgent need of discoursing from the pulpit on all questions vital to religious faith, in addition to interpreting the scriptural lesson.[7] To be sure, this type of preaching with its dialectical and philosophical background was no stranger in the Synagogue. Fully two centuries before the rise of Arama, Jacob Anatoli was delivering discourses stocked with all the weapons of a defensive faith; and the sermons of Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi, a compatriot of an earlier century, from which Arama quotes occasionally,[8] should have furnished sufficient warrant and stimulus for the newer mode in pulpit expression. However, the realization of a present need is a stronger incentive to action than the most illustrious example of another day; and Arama, stirred by the challenging conditions of his new surroundings, applied himself vigorously to the task before him until he succeeded in evolving a species of homiletical discourse which, if not altogether new, superbly met the needs of his own time and profoundly influenced the style and character of Jewish preaching all through the subsequent centuries.

The first product of his early labors, though not the first to be published,[9] was his treatise on the relation of philosophy to theology bearing the title חזות קשה—"a Grievous Vision." This little volume whose chief aim was "to stir up zeal for Torah, piety, and the service of God,"[10] appeared after the

coercive measure, though he had the temerity to attack fundamental doctrines of the Christian Church (*Ibid.*).

[7] הקדמת המחבר.

[8] Ser. 80, p. 129. [9] הקדמת המחבר.

[10] Ser. 92, p. 61.—In a poem written on the occasion of the completion of his work, he boldly asserts that the severe trials plaguing his generation spring from the impious exaltation of philosophy over theology, and that in

publication of his עקדת יצחק, and is in substance, as it may well have been in fact, a summary of the theological views underlying his sermons. On the sermons themselves, he had been working all through his stay in Tarragona and Fraga,[11] and not until he had removed to Calatayud, the last rabbinical post he occupied in Spain, did he begin to revise them in preparation for their publication.[12] In Calatayud, it seems, he entered upon the happiest stage of his career. For it was there that, in addition to the honor paid him as a famed preacher, his hands were sufficiently strengthened to enable him to return to the love of his youth, which was to raise up many disciples and bring them nigh unto the Torah. And the Yeshiba he founded there not only afforded him the desired opportunity to implant knowledge in the young but also gave fresh impetus to his creative powers. Besides completing his chief work, the עקדת יצחק,[13] he produced commentaries to the

---

the book he sends forth he smites his opponents out of his great zeal for the Lord of hosts.—חזות קשה, p. 48.

[11] It seems that while rabbi of Tarragona he also ministered to the neighboring community of Fraga, although some sixty miles separated the two—והערים אשר באתי בהם בתחילה הנאה והמעונגה טראגונה והקרובה אליה העירה ברג'ה הקדמת המחבר—.

[12] הקדמת המחבר.

[13] The עקדת יצחק, comprising 105 Portals, each of which is a separate sermon designed for a particular Sabbath—ולזה ראיתי לדחות ביאורי על הדרוש המיוחד לשבת שיהיה בשער נ"ה הבא בקרוב ב"ה (Ser. 52, p. 246)—opens with a Preface, mainly autobiographical in character, and is followed by an Introduction in which at the close of an elaborate homily the author makes the humble declaration that, if his arduous labors through the years have borne fruitful results, his success must be attributed solely to the devout spirit in which he faced his tasks. His efforts have been spent in the service of God. From Him he has received his strength and capacity; to Him he now directs his prayer, that nothing but the truth may be found in the pages of his book.

The work, while numbering 105 Portals, actually contains 117 individual sermons. Portal 25 is made up of two sermons, joined one to the other homiletically but standing wide apart thematically. Portal 44 is divided into three parts each of which represents, homiletically, a different structure and is tied

books of Esther, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentation, and Ecclesiastes,[14] and prepared a commentary to the Book of Proverbs, bearing the title of יד אבשלום.[15]

In 1492, sharing the fate of his exiled brethren, Arama left his native Spain and sought refuge in Naples, where, within a

to the other only by the threads of a common theme. Portal 67 may be described as a series of sermons, seven in number, on the major Holy Days, all held together by the initial text. In fact, Arama himself would have us so regard this Portal since, in apologizing for its excessive length, he counsels the reader to peruse each part on the special occasion for which it was designed (p. 149). Portal 105 is composed of two sermons, both dealing with the last days and labors of Moses, but neither in text nor in development of ideas are they related to each other. Then there are two additional sermons, neither of which is included among the Portals, the one being entitled Introduction to the Portals and the other Conclusion of the Portals.

[14] To each of these commentaries the author affixes a brief Foreword in which he sums up the chief purpose of the biblical book. Thus, the aim of Ruth, he says, is to foster a belief in God's providence and stress the doctrine of retribution. The Song of Songs seeks to confirm our faith in the high character and destiny of Israel. The Book of Ecclesiastes, he claims, is a series of dialogues carried on between the truly pious and those lacking in true knowledge and faith. Having thus stated what he conceives to be the essential aim of the given book, he proceeds to interpret the text in the light of its central thought. In the commentary to the Book of Esther, he slightly deviates from this procedure. After defining the nature and purpose of the book, he raises a number of questions which appear to uncover contradictions in the text and incongruities in the incidents related, and forthwith sets out to resolve all difficulties by his own exposition.

[15] The title of this commentary, Arama informs us, is derived from the name of his son-in-law, Solomon, augmented by the word אב, which is descriptive of his own fatherly relation to him, and preceded by יד to indicate that he after whom the book is named, as well as the author, had a "hand" in its production, since it was at the urgent request of the former that the work was undertaken. Solomon, to whose tender memory the book is dedicated, died within the month of his wedding-day (פתיחה—יד אבשלום).

Arama divides the book into three parts, interpreting the various themes of which the respective parts are composed, and indicating the significance of each verse in the development of the main thought. It is the most important of his commentaries. The Book of Proverbs with its mildly philosophical observations and sound practical wisdom seems to offer a most suitable field for the exercise of his peculiar powers and predilections.

year or two, he died and received honorable burial at the hands of his only son, his companion in exile, Meir Arama.[16]

3

The evolution of the Jewish sermon bears striking testimony to the plastic character of the medieval Synagogue. That Judaism, a religion of law, yet contrived to maintain itself as a growing organism by the simple device of reinterpretation, is too well known to require special emphasis. It is equally recognized that by employing the same method Jewish thinkers and scholars of all ages found themselves at liberty to engraft new ideas upon the ancient "Tree of Life." No unalterable rigidity, neither in the realm of law nor in the world of ideas, could ever check the natural flow of Jewish thought and principle. But what is not so generally known, or admitted, is that the religious institutions of the people, no less than the law of the scribe and the thought of the sage, were susceptible of great change. The Synagogue, it is claimed by many, with its standard liturgy and venerated traditions, was adequately armed at all times to resist the invasion of any foreign elements into its principal functions; and not until the new era of emancipation arose did it yield, in some quarters at least, and after a most stubborn resistance, to the clamorous cry for change. Yet, what more startling innovation within the Synagogue could we contemplate than the virtual transformation of the Jewish sermon, a process which began, it would seem, in thirteenth-century France and reached completion in fifteenth-century Spain?

[16] Isaac Arama must have died in Naples a little before 1495, as his son Meir Arama, in the introduction to his מאיר תהלות, states that in 1492 together with his father he came to Naples, and that he tarried there after his father's death until 1495, when in consequence of the earthquake of that year he departed for Turkey and landed in Salonica (מאיר תהלות, הקדמה, Venice, 1590).

For many centuries, from the earliest days all through the gaonic period, the Jewish sermon, while at no time of static character, retained its unique status as a pure product of synagogal life. It arose in the Synagogue; it grew in conformity with the laws of its nature and in response to the vital needs of the people; it spoke to the Jew in a language understood by the Jew. To be sure, contact with alien cultures stimulated the thought and diversified the themes of our earliest preachers. The early Midrashim, rich repository of most ancient homilies, teem with non-Jewish ideas and contentions. But while absorbing some foreign terms and admitting into its discussions views of exotic origin, the most elaborate homily remained undeviatingly true to its original pattern. It was not until the Revival of Learning, in which the Jew was no mean factor, began to stir the intellectual life of Europe, bringing to light fresh truths and novel forms of articulation, that the popular teachers of the Synagogue, too, fascinated by the new modes of thought and expression, sought to adapt the new vehicle to their own needs. Thus, a new style of preaching, a style hitherto confined to the classical utterances of the ancient world, made its initial appearance in the Jewish pulpit, and with apparently little opposition or disturbance, as far as the new elements in themselves were concerned.[17] Nor, when some two centuries later, as in the individual instance of Isaac Arama, acquaintance with the homiletical methods of Christian clergymen pointed the way to an improved pulpit technique, did the Jewish

[17] The experience of Anatoli only corroborates the view that when no religious belief or doctrine seemed imperilled, the newness of a method would not debar its use from the Synagogue. The objection to Anatoli's preaching arose from the fear, sensed by some of his own friends, that the Maimonidean method of interpretation might undermine faith in the literal truth of scriptural narrative. The opposition he encountered was thus directed against the free use of allegorical interpretation, not against scholastic preaching per se.

preacher hesitate to profit by the example of the interpreters of another faith. Not even the masses of the people, commonly depicted as the most formidable bulwark against change, frowned upon the innovation. In fact, as we have seen from Arama's own testimony, it was the people who goaded the preacher to follow the new trail.[18]

Obviously, not change but surrender, not imitation but submergence, was dreaded and decried by the medieval Synagogue. To learn from others without forgetting its own teachings or, better still, to defend its own truths with weapons forged by another faith, for that, it would seem, the medieval Synagogue found ample warrant in Jewish doctrine and practice. Hence, if the revolutionary changes wrought in synagogal preaching by purely external influences met with general approbation and active encouragement, it must have been that in the view of leader and people alike the new elements thus introduced promised added strength to an existing institution without altering its essential character or compromising any of its recognized functions. And, indeed, when we examine the sermons of Isaac Arama, which may be said to have stabilized, if not actually effected, the most important of these changes, we gain for this supposition the fullest confirmation. For Arama, according to his own confession, deliberately set out to mould his sermon, in some important features at least, after a model then current in the Christian pulpit, though not actually devised by it.[19] Yet at no time did Arama venture to

[18] הקדמת המחבר.

[19] Scholastic preaching, by which we mean the combined use of theology and philosophy in the exposition of the scriptural lesson, did not enter the Synagogue through the Church. The great representatives of the scholastic mode of thought from whom the Church derived its new homiletical style were Albert the Great, and his celebrated pupil Thomas Aquinas, both of whom lived and worked in the thirteenth century. The great Jewish representative

depart from the accepted form, not to speak of the traditional function and content, of the Jewish sermon. He enriched it, so he believed, with new elements of strength, but he would not divest it of its old-time power and appeal. He retained the old cast, even though the diverse metals he poured into it often came from foreign mines.

To Arama, as to all his predecessors in the pulpit, the chief function of Jewish preachers, and greatest privilege as well, is to admonish the people concerning their religious duties and expound to them the specific obligations each special occasion entails, thus upholding a practice deeply rooted in the communities of Israel.[20] But the preacher's task, Arama soon learned, extended beyond this paramount duty; it also called for a cogent and attractive presentation of Jewish ideas and beliefs, a requirement many of our teachers have been slow in apprehending.[21] In the preacher, therefore, Torah must be supplemented with wisdom, if he is to establish right views and ward off the attacks of error and of falsehood.[22] For true philosophy, especially that which emanates from Aristotle's *Ethics*, harmonizes perfectly with the pure teachings of Judaism. It may well kindle its lights beside the candelabra of the Torah itself, since they are seen to illumine views and concepts of great ethical value.[23] Accordingly, in addition to expatiating in his sermons on the characteristic institutions and observances of Judaism, Arama undertakes to discourse on a vast variety of theological and philosophical themes the clearer understanding of which the preacher deems necessary for a sound religious outlook and

---

of this mode of thought through whom scholastic preaching made its appearance in the Synagogue was Moses Maimonides, who preceded these great churchmen by almost a full century.

[20] Ser. 55, p. 287. [21] הקדמת המחבר.

[22] *Ibid.* [23] *Ibid.*

the intelligent performance of the ethical obligations of life. The nature of God,[24] the essence of the soul,[25] the problem of the freedom of the will,[26] the doctrine of immortality,[27] the significance of miracles,[28] the mystery of prophecy,[29] the function of ritual law,[30] the relation of philosophy to theology,[31] the concept of sin,[32] the power of prayer,[33] the glory of repentance,[34] the meaning of spirituality,[35] the interdependence of the material and the spiritual,[36] the constitution of society and its mandates,[37] the place of ethics in religion,[38] the blessings of peace,[39] the role of Israel in the world,[40]—all these questions most vital to a rational orientation to life, Arama discusses with much profundity and warmth of feeling, not as essayist in search of a solution to the riddle of life but as interpreter of the Word bent on the fuller elucidation of scriptural truth. He analyzes ideas of deep philosophical import, he weighs theoretical views advanced by Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers, he argues vehemently and quotes copiously, all that he may buttress a thought whose light is sufficiently strong to dispel the mists hovering over the text, thus disclosing a biblical or rabbinical truth of great spiritual worth.

To achieve this end without sacrificing any of the means sanctified by synagogal usage, Arama designed a framework for his sermon which, while accommodating all the new elements, repudiated none of the old. The composition before us falls into two component parts, the first of which is designated by the author as דרישה, investigation, and the second as פרישה, exposition.[41] In the first part, the preacher aims to ex-

[24] Ser. 1, 4, 21, 38, 54, 56, 87. [25] Ser. 6.
[26] Ser. 3, 22, 36, 93, 103. [27] Ser. 64. [28] Ser. 13, 15.
[29] Ser. 19, 25, 29, 35. [30] Ser. 60. [31] Ser. 27.
[32] Ser. 40, 86. [33] Ser. 58. [34] Ser. 100.
[35] Ser. 71, 92, 101. [36] Ser. 85, 91. [37] Ser. 8, 12, 43.
[38] Ser. 39, 62. [39] Ser. 74, 81.
[40] Ser. 31, 66, 84, 88. [41] הקדמת המחבר.

amine a philosophical idea or thought in the light of which his chosen texts, the biblical and the rabbinical, with which the sermon is headed, seem to yield a profounder truth than is visible on the surface. This is the section in which the thinker, the investigator of new ideas, holds sway. With the completion of this portion of his task, the preacher turns for the nonce from the דרישה to assume the role of the expounder, not of a single text such as occupied his attention at the outset, but of a considerable part of the scriptural lesson. The פרישה, or exposition, thus deals with the whole setting, or context, from which the main text is taken. In this section, it is the scriptural commentator, the homiletical exegete, who predominates. The entire episode or general setting is closely scanned. Numerous difficulties and obscurities readily suggest themselves. The lesson of the week seems shot through with contradictions and inconsistencies. These must be eliminated, if popular instruction in the Scriptures is to consist of more than the mere interpretation of a single, isolated text. And as the preacher proceeds with the exposition of the whole passage so as to remove the difficulties raised, we discover that the central thought of the דרישה, which made the main text luminous and significant, also holds a solution for many of the questions presented in the פרישה. The gap between the דרישה and the פרישה, which at the first glance appeared wide and unbridgeable, is thus skilfully closed. The two distinct parts of the sermon, the "investigation" of new ideas, imposed by the conditions of the day, and the "exposition" of the book of the Lord, enjoined by immemorial custom, thus meet and merge into one harmonious whole.

In the "investigation" Arama stands forth as the thinker in the pulpit, the most profound expounder of religious truth within the medieval Synagogue. To be sure, he was no philosopher in the technical sense, no abstract metaphysician

pursuing blithely the slender intimations of a subtle ratiocination. He was a Jewish theologian irrevocably committed to a large body of transmitted truth. His principles of faith were fixed. His religious practices were clear and constant. But his mental faculties knew no bounds, and would conform in the exercise of their power to no set restrictions. Thus, he roamed over large areas of human thought without the loss, or surrender, of a single conviction or habit. He repudiated none of the accepted tenets of his faith, spurned none of the recognized guides to conduct; neither would he desist from investigating, in the interest of a wider knowledge of the truth, the more complex implications of a less tenable doctrine. In a word, he relinquished none of his own possessions, but penetrated quite deeply into neighboring domains, only to return from the adventure all the more eager to preserve the boundaries of his own inheritance. Such was his temper as a thinker, a temper that held his receptive powers within prescribed limits but left his speculative faculty untrammeled. He was free to study and dissect all the aspects of a given truth, all the trends and tendencies of the thought of his day. And it was in the minute analysis of ideas, the judicious weighing of facts and reasons, the quick discernment of the flaws and fallacies hidden in some fine-spun theories, that he revealed a quality of mind not unlike that of the true philosopher.

No one can read a single one of his sermons without being impressed with the vigor of his mind and the vitality of his thought. His expression may at times lack clarity and polish, but his thought is always sturdy and significant. We need but trace the bare skeleton of his "investigation," as drawn in some of the most typical of his sermons, to realize the robust nature of his thinking. Take, for example, the twenty-first sermon, which deals with a theological theme. It opens with a

brief statement of purpose. The preacher's aim in this sermon is to show how we can form an idea of God's knowledge without having to assume that it is ever incomplete or changeable. The biblical text that follows, reads: "And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham."[42] The rabbinic text is derived from an ancient homily in which the word "test" or "prove" is identified with a similar Hebrew word signifying "banner," and the thought is expressed that God tests the righteous so that they may rise above the mass of humankind, like the flag of a ship fluttering in the air from the topmost pole, and thus justify, as well as exemplify, God's way of dealing with man.[43] Then the preacher proceeds with his introduction. Even as a sentient being is distinguished by its sense-perceptions, without which it cannot be said to live, so is the intelligent soul defined by its capacity for knowledge, and when there is any disparity between its potentialities and actual accomplishments, its identity is seriously impaired. Thus, man's knowledge, conditioned by his capacity, is limited indeed, though it be imperative that he exhaust its possibilities to the full. As regards God's knowledge, conceded by all to be infinite even as must be His capacity, there is no unanimity of opinion among philosophers as to the real nature of its content. For the things we humans know are neither constant nor static. What is incomplete and variable could not well form part of an absolute knowledge. Hence, some philosophers express the opinion that God who is ever the same can know only the eternal, unchangeable causes from which a vast variety of particular forms perpetually flow. Others, impressed with the thought that God knows himself, the first cause, contend that His knowledge must embrace the entire endless chain of cause and effect. It is apparent, though, that whatever their differ-

[42] Gen. 22,1. [43] Gen. r. 55, 1.

ences be, they all share the view that God's knowledge is general, contemplating the particular only as part of a ceaseless process and not as a separate individual entity. To buttress this view with proofs derived from reason, they offer the following logical demonstrations. God, the all-perfect, so runs their argument, can dispense with a knowledge of the particular, so necessary to give fuller completeness to an imperfect being. In the second place, knowledge of the particular is valuable insofar as it impresses itself upon the mind and produces distinct images which enlarge the vision, —surely, the Infinite mind needs no such mental stimulation. In the third place, since the particular can be grasped only by physical means with which it is intimately related, it obviously lies outside the range of the all-pervading spirit, with which it can have no affinity. In the fourth place, since the particular exists in, and is constantly affected by, time, it could not but remain foreign to a power that is known to transcend time. And, finally, the sad condition of our human society wherein no justice seems to prevail, definitely precludes the possibility of a just God knowing and guiding the life of the individual. All these arguments have, of course, been extensively dealt with in Maimuni's great work, and it is not necessary to discuss them here in detail. Suffice it to say that, cogent as they may appear, they fail to disturb our faith in a Providence that watches over our individual lives. Our powers of understanding are too weak and limited. We do not comprehend the nature of the insignificant gnat, nor the essence of the tiniest blade of grass, much less can we hope to understand the full nature of God. To us, therefore, entrenched in our Jewish faith, the implications of our text present a real difficulty. Since God's knowledge embraces every particular individual, object, or incident, of what significance could it be to us to be told that God tested Abraham?

To discover the exact meaning of our text, we must examine the various purposes for which tests are undertaken. In the main, there are three objects for which experimental tests are made. The physician, for example, experiments with a certain drug that he may learn to know its specific virtue. When, on the other hand, the nature and power of the ingredient are known to him, he administers it to his patients so that its potentialities, established in the laboratory, may find fulfilment in action and the experiment thus stand completed. Then, again, when these tests have proved successful, the physician may wish to acquaint the world with his findings, and so he stages a public demonstration in which step by step the process is repeated and the results made manifest. Now, all these operations illustrate three types of tests, differentiated one from the other by the diverse purposes for which they are conducted. And as we turn to the narrative from which our text is derived we find little difficulty in ascertaining which type is here represented. Surely, the first is inadmissible, in view of the infinite wisdom of God. Nor is the third type wholly applicable here. The supposition that in the mind of God the trial to which Abraham was put had for its sole object the exaltation of the patriarch in the eyes of his contemporaries, is too fantastic to merit serious consideration. Our story, therefore, can comprehend only the second type. God knew, to be sure, that Abraham's capacity for sacrifice was great, but the finest potentialities unless given outer expression will remain feeble and incomplete. It was then to perfect the character of the patriarch, to complete the experiment, as it were, that "God did prove Abraham." Yet to us today, even as to the untold generations that have gone before us, this wondrous episode in the life of Abraham partakes of the nature of a public experiment, affording us, as it does, open instruction in the high virtue

of sacrifice. We read the story and see Abraham exalted, like the banner of a vessel waving high in the air; and contemplating the heroic life of this exemplar of our virtues, we learn to understand and, as it is intimated in the rabbinic text, to justify God's conduct toward man.[44]

And the same intellectual quality marks the "investigation" as developed in his purely ethical sermons. Typical of this class is the eighty-first sermon which, as the heading indicates, treats of peace, the highest of the virtues. The biblical text: "And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom, etc."[45] is part of the passage in which Moses pleads with the King of Edom to permit his hosts to pass through the land in peaceful manner. The rabbinic text is taken from a homily woven around the incident related in the ensuing chapter. A similar plea, we are told, was addressed by Israel to Sihon King of the Amorites,[46] but this time it was met with the sword, and terminated in the utter defeat of those who wielded it. This narrative, observes the ancient homilist, reveals the peremptory character of peace, exacting the most persistent effort to preserve it. For though the command had been given to Israel: "Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the Valley of Arnon; behold I have given into thy hand Sihon the Amorite, King of Heshbon, and his land; begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle,"[47] yet craving and pursuing peace, Israel petitioned the King of the Amorites to open his borders for peaceful passage.[48] The "investigation" opens with the thought that the perfection of our nature seems to be the ultimate goal of Israel's Torah. When the law enjoins upon us the duty to release the enemy's ass from the burden under which it may lie prostrate, it is obviously intended to teach us that

[44] Ser. 21, pp. 231–237. [45] Num. 20,14. [46] Num. 21,21.
[47] Deut. 2,24. [48] Num. r. 19, 16.

by the frequent repetition of the practice we shall succeed in eradicating from our hearts the sense of hate. Similarly, when we are urged to lend of our means to the needy with open hand and gladsome heart,[49] it must be that in the mind of the divine legislator such acts persisted in were sure to broaden our sympathies and crush in us any tendency toward churlishness. And if laws seeking to refine our attitude toward single individuals have the power to purify the soul and strengthen the character, it necessarily follows that principles of conduct involving the good of large groups of men will affect the personality to a still greater degree. Thus, in Judaism the principle of justice receives decided emphasis because it is so extensive in its scope, embracing a large variety of social relations and holding, in our pursuit or neglect of it, infinite possibilities of happiness or distress for great numbers of men. Thus, too, the mere study of Torah is given preëminence among our religious duties, because it is the means of instructing us in all the obligations of life. Now, as concerns the welfare of the entire social organism, there is no ethical law or principle that is at all comparable to peace in range of influence and power of beneficence. For peace is not just one of our virtues; it is the sum and substance of all our virtues. Its presence brings blessings untold; its absence spells social disaster and desolation. Hence, the preservation of peace is a paramount duty; and even when war becomes inevitable, the realization that peace is the only justifiable goal of all human strife should never depart from those who must engage in it. Moses, though launched upon an enterprise that could not but lead to war, always strove to compass his end by peaceful means. He never lost sight of the final goal of his efforts. Peace he would pursue even amidst war-like activities. And so, too, as in the plea for peace directed to

[49] Deut. 15,7–10.

Sihon King of the Amorites, did the people of Israel never relax in their pursuit of peace,—a pursuit the imperative character of which finds such vigorous and impressive presentation in the rabbinic text.[50]

The minute analysis of significant ideas, for which the "investigation" is justly noted, gives to the sermons of Arama a dignity and elevation very much akin to the grandeur of sublime truth. It invests the simplest monition with nobility and solemn seriousness. Exhortation, with Arama, is never the crystallization of fervent feeling; it is always the culmination of well-reasoned, albeit richly-imaginative, thought. Hence, not only in those sermons which deal with a weighty theological problem or with a specific ethical principle, but also in sermons which are hortatory in character, wherein the preacher pleads for a fuller realization of the high purposes and tasks of life, we shall find the earnest and profound thinker at work. Thus, the hundred and first sermon, typical example of this group, offers us an "investigation" surpassed in thought and homiletical power by but few of his more pronounced intellectual efforts. The sermon in question takes for its biblical text the verse: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil."[51] The rabbinic text is derived from an apparently unrelated statement of the rabbis, that seven things preceded the creation of the world: the Torah, Repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehinnom, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the Name of the Messiah.[52] The preacher then sets out to study in his usual analytical fashion the concepts involved in the biblical text. Life and death are not simple terms. There is a life that is life indeed, and there is a life that is no better than death. Those who make earthly pleasures the end of existence, who live only unto the flesh, may be regarded as spiritually dead though

[50] Ser. 81, pp. 137–142. [51] Deut. 30,15. [52] Ned. 39b.

physically alive. And so, too, there is a death that is natural and inevitable and therefore good; and there is a death that is tragically unreal and therefore deplorable. The death of the body, when the material and temporal element is severed from the spiritual and eternal, may in no sense be described as evil. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,"[53] exclaims the Psalmist. It is when we wilfully destroy the soul within us, so that what originally bore the stamp of immortality is made to sink into nothingness, it is such a death that is the greatest of all evils. And this is the distinction that is so impressively drawn in the biblical text. The contrast, we note, is not between life and death, and good and evil, but between life and good, and death and evil. "Good" and "evil" may well refer to "life" and "death," respectively. Thus, what is really set before us is life, mere physical being, and the good life; and natural, beneficent death, and the death that is evil, the death of the soul. Therein lies the gravity, the true peril of the choice we are to make.

But to make this choice wisely, to be able to distinguish between the real and the spurious, between the good and the vicious, we must first of all have a clear comprehension of the supreme goal of life. Yet to know the goal without perceiving the road that will lead to it, is but to possess useless knowledge. It is equally important, once the direct road is discerned, that we learn how to get onto that road from the narrow and winding pathways into which we have strayed. Again, to cherish all the more greatly the goal itself, it is essential that we know beforehand of the benefits that will accrue to us when we reach our destination and of the losses we shall sustain when we fail to reach it. Nor is it possible to prosecute such an undertaking with any hope of success if we

[53] Ps. 116,15.

lack the guidance, the encouragement and inspiration, of some wise and devoted counsellor. And, surely, unless supplied with all the needed equipment and provisions, we dare not enter upon such a long and arduous journey. Now, in Judaism, all these steps are clearly defined and given well-known designations. The Throne of Glory symbolizes the goal of our strivings. The Torah is the path leading to that goal. Repentance is the means by which we may extricate ourselves from the labyrinthine wilderness in which we aimlessly wander and come at last upon the broad highway. The Garden of Eden stands for the good that will be ours when we attain our goal, just as Gehinnom signifies the evil that will befall us if we miss the goal. The *Name* of the Messiah clearly embodies the thought of helpful counsel and vigorous stimulation, such as may come from any inspired leader of the people. And the Temple, for long the source of material blessings as well as the center of spiritual strength, represents the equipment, the necessary provisions of the pilgrim as he trudges on his way toward the far-off goal. Hence the significance of the rabbinic statement. The Throne of Glory, the Torah, Repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehinnom, the Name of the Messiah, and the Temple,—these seven things preceded the creation of the world, that is to say, *these* must take precedence in any scheme of creation, since in *them* we find the underlying causes and purposes of all creation.[54]

The "investigation" is followed by the "exposition," in which not the text but the context, the whole setting of the text, is closely scrutinized and its exegetical difficulties and discrepancies carefully adjusted. Arama seems to have sensed the inadequacy of the current practice to isolate a single verse from the scriptural lesson and make the whole sermon hinge on it. The persistency with which he pursued the

[54] Ser. 101, pp. 172–178.

method of broadening the base of his sermon, making it embrace besides the main text a sizable portion of the assigned weekly lesson as read during the synagogal service, would indicate a definite reluctance on his part to approve, much less to adopt, the prevalent, diminutive framework. To be sure, preaching in the Synagogue had never been restricted to the initial text. At an early stage in the evolution of the Jewish sermon, the very introduction to the preacher's homily was made to consist of the interpretation of an extraneous biblical verse which in skilful hands led directly and inevitably to the pentateuchal text. Nor did the body of the homily ever lack the authoritative support which, to Jewish preachers of all ages, could come only from the cumulative evidence of scriptural truth. But while the single-text homily, barring perhaps the very first stage in the sermon's growth, had never obtained full vogue within the Synagogue, none before the days of Arama had deliberately and consistently sought to include a large segment of the pericope within the homiletical structure of the weekly sermon. The "exposition" as conceived and developed by Arama, is a unique creation; and, forming an integral part of almost all of his sermons, may be given equal rank, in importance and influence, with the "investigation." The "exposition" proves Arama a great homiletical exegete, even as the "investigation" proclaims him a profound homiletical thinker.

In his exegesis, Arama follows a well-defined theory. The literal meaning of a scriptural verse, when the sense is complete, cannot be superseded by the broader homiletical interpretation put upon it; the latter is meant to supplement, not to supplant, the former.[55] To speak of the soul, for example, is not to overlook the body; and to stress a spiritual connotation discovered in a given biblical narrative, there-

[55] Ser. 7, p. 94; Ser. 16, p. 184.

fore, is not to ignore any law or custom implicit in its plain meaning.[56] Properly speaking, there is no conflict between the specific application of a scriptural statement, even if it be one of law, and its broader interpretation in terms of the spirit. "True, these prescriptions are of divine origin and indubitably true, and as regards their enforcement in practical life we must abide by the exposition of our sages. None the less, for speculative purposes, we cannot refrain from probing deeper into these four categories into which Scripture divides them."[57] For the Torah, be it never forgotten, even when dealing with matters pertaining to practical life in the most concrete manner, is never wholly free from diverse hints and implications of a deeply spiritual nature.[58] Hence, while accepting wherever possible the construction put upon a biblical verse or passage by the interpreters of past centuries, Arama frequently avows the intention never to desist from carrying forward his own search and speculation in the interest of a wider knowledge of the truth.[59] "In this exposition," he explains on one occasion, "I have been guided by my own views. I have sought to furnish it with strong support, since the exposition of our early interpreters fails to satisfy me. Of course, I may have been unable to plumb the full depth of their meaning."[60] "This is the interpretation," he declares on another occasion, "that seems most reasonable to me, its only defect being that it fails to coincide with the views of our ancient expounders. Yet, have they not themselves taught us that the words of Scripture are susceptible of a great variety of interpretations?"[61]

This rational basis for a broader exegesis enabled Arama to pursue an independent course in determining both the sig-

[56] *Ibid.* [57] Ser. 73, p. 27.
[58] Ser. 97, p. 110. [59] Ser. 31, p. 379; Ser. 78, p. 99.
[60] Ser. 10, p. 130. [61] Ser. 13, p. 164.

nification and larger import of a given text. While the plain meaning of the scriptural lesson could never be spurned, it had always to be deepened and refined so that its inner worth and beauty might capture the imagination and exalt the spirit of the people. To meet this essential need of the edifying preacher, Arama naturally sought, and quite readily found, authoritative sanction for the method he meant to pursue. And it is because in the untrammeled freedom of interpretation Arama had gained for himself he but rarely showed any tendency toward textual distortion, wildness of fancy, or dialectical extravagance, that even today we hail him as undisputed master in the art of homiletical exegesis.

While in expounding the scriptural lesson Arama frequently employs the allegorical method of interpretation, as we shall have occasion to note in fuller detail, the large bulk of his exegetical material is derived from the simple analysis of the text as given, though not always as commonly understood. The text itself, in its most literal meaning, contains a deeper truth than is seen on the surface. Sometimes, all that is necessary is to read imaginatively a single word or phrase in a given passage. Take, for example, the biblical statement: "If thou seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."[62] The emphatic words here are "seek her as silver," and may of course imply no more than intensity of search; in which case, the thought that the fear and knowledge of God may be compassed by intense determination and effort, with the speed and certainty and satisfaction of the laborious acquisition of material riches, leaves much to be desired. The knowledge of God presupposes no such circumscribed quest, however arduously

[62] Prov. 2,4–5.

prosecuted. Nor is the righteous life, which flows from it, ever finished or complete. However, the phrase in question may be construed as expressive not of the intensity of pursuit but of the avidity of possession. It is only when spiritual attainment leaves one as unsatisfied, as eager for still greater conquests, as is the seeker after tangible wealth, whose greed knows no bounds, that wisdom and piety may be won.[63]

Or, consider the striking similes of the Psalmist when, in contrasting the wicked with the righteous, he likens the former to the grass and the latter to the palm-tree. "When the wicked spring up as the grass . . . . the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree."[64] The Psalmist is not indulging here in rhetorical tricks, in pretty figures of speech. He is rather depicting in most vivid colors the essential qualities, the distinguishing characteristics, of the two divergent types. The palm-tree bodies forth stability and beauty; the grass of the field typifies frailty and fleeting charm. The palm-tree stands for unity amidst diversity: one common root, one unified stem, from which many branches and numerous leaves grow and unfold. However varied in their qualities and accomplishments, the righteous, too, impelled by a single purpose and beckoned by a common goal, coalesce and act as a united body. The wicked, on the other hand, being like blades of grass, each growing out of its own root, lack the power of cohesion and therefore give no promise of permanence. Again, it is in the nature of grass to grow in indiscriminate profusion, covering with verdure all places, high and low, conspicuous and obscure, thus bespeaking for it neither enduring strength nor increasing fruitfulness. The palm-tree, on the other hand, strikes root with singular fastidiousness, selecting the soil most conducive to its growth and the place most suitable for the display of its manifold

[63] Ser. 68, p. 193. [64] Ps. 92,8, 13.

charms, thus bidding fair to last and yield satisfying fruit. And so, too, with the righteous, "planted in the House of the Lord, they shall flourish in the courts of our God."[65]

Or, to illustrate further this method of exposition, take the charge to Gideon to test the fitness of his warriors by the manner in which they drink of the water: "Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink."[66] Only those who lapped of the water, we are informed, three hundred in number, were selected, while the rest of the people who bowed down upon their knees to drink were disqualified for the service. And the reason for it, says Arama, is not far to seek. The true soldier in the army of the Lord must be one who has learned to exercise restraint and moderation in the enjoyment of earthly pleasures, lapping, as it were, by putting his hand to the mouth, thus quenching his thirst without any loss of dignity and self-respect. Those, however, who bow down to their desires, who fall upon their knees at every gust of passion, that they may drink their fill of sensuous delights, exhibit neither the temper nor the discipline of the true man of valor.[67]

This simple exegesis, while extensively used by Arama and quite characteristic of his homiletical method, gives but an incomplete picture of the more striking peculiarities of his style. His philosophical bent, which he exercised with much freedom in the "investigation," makes itself felt also in the "exposition." Generally, it is some difficulty or obscurity in the text, an evident pleonasm or seeming vagueness, that challenges the critical acumen of the preacher. The scriptural verse, for example, which reads: "I call heaven and

[65] Ser. 39, p. 85. [66] Jud. 7.5.
[67] Ser. 97, p. 112.

earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed,"[68] requires special clarification and interpretation. Aside from the obvious redundancy of the clause: "that thou mayest live," there is the more vexing problem concerning the insistence to "choose life." We may *will* to live the life herein implied, but we cannot *choose* to live it, as is well pointed out in the *Ethics* of Aristotle. Only what subserves the attainment of an absolute goal is subject to choice, since the ways leading to it may be many and various; what constitutes an ultimate end is unique and cannot therefore be espoused by a process of selection but by a single act of the will. However, to surmount these difficulties, it is necessary to remember that while life in its highest connotation is singular and supreme, in its relation to human thought and conduct it may be comprehended under a variety of aspects. There is a life lived for the sake of material accumulation, and there is a life lived for sheer physical pleasure. There is also the life lived for truth and goodness. Thus, we speak of the life of the rich, the life of the pleasure-loving, and the life of the righteous. Now, all these are specific types of life, in respect to which one may be said to exercise his freedom of choice. Herein lies the signification of the divine admonition: "Choose life, that thou mayest live,"—select that pattern of life which shall prepare thee for the true life, the life everlasting.[69]

Again, to cite one more example of the method, the biblical passage in which Moses complains of the unbearable burden laid upon him by God, bristles with a number of difficulties. It reads: "Have I conceived all this people? Have I brought them forth, that thou shouldest say unto me: carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing-father (nurse) carrieth the

[68] Deut. 30,19. [69] Ser. 101, p. 176.

sucking child, unto the land which Thou didst swear unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?"[70] Focusing closest attention on every single word of the argument, we cannot fail to detect several points of perplexity. In the first place, after the expression "conceived" the addition of "brought forth" seems to lend little force to the clear meaning of the verse and might well have been dispensed with. Nor is there any visible reason for the sudden shift from "parent," as implied in the opening lines, to "nurse," as stressed in the later figure. Besides, the last query seems to be irrelevant to the major contention. If it be true that Moses, the plaintiff in the case, bears no responsibility toward the people whom he is commanded to serve, then it matters little whether he be in a position to supply their wants or not. It is evident that the passage as read is in need of a more minute analysis of its basic ideas. And when we examine closely the obligation to care for the physical needs of others, we discover three possible motives or forces that impel us thereto. It may be that we are actuated by a sense of duty, a rational urge to help, such as must spring up within us when we contemplate the distress of our neighbors, of our relatives, and especially of those who owe their very being to us. We only follow the dictates of reason when we extend a helping hand to those whose lives are bound up with our own, and may even have sprung from ours. Then, again, it may be that something stronger than reason or ethical compulsion is the motive-power of our benevolent deeds.When, for example, we tenderly nurture our own tiny offspring we do so as instinctively as when the beast of the field tends to its young. And, finally, the obligation in question may have been voluntarily assumed, for a term and compensation specified in a definite contract, in which case neither reason

[70] Num. 11,12–13.

nor instinct, but personal pledge, contractual agreement, constitutes the constraining power. Now, Moses, in stating his case, endeavors to demonstrate his complete exemption from any responsibility toward Israel. "Have I conceived all this people?"—Is their life in any way linked with mine? Have I been instrumental in placing them where they are? What rational motive or moral force is there to impel me to the task imposed on me? Nor should it be expected that I would be drawn to them by some dumb parental instinct. For, "have I brought them forth?" Of course, it may be argued that I have personally obligated myself to minister to the people's needs when I accepted the charge to lead them. In other words, I must carry them even as a hired nurse carries the sucking child, out of a sense of contractual obligation. In this case, כי תאמר אלי, "if thou shouldest say (this) unto me," then I may counter the contention with the simple claim that no contract can be held as valid and binding when either of the contracting parties finds it impossible to comply with its terms. And, indeed, "whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?"[71]

Yet, it is not always textual difficulties that form the background of Arama's homiletical exegesis. Not infrequently, what perturbs the preacher is the biblical thought itself which, though clear in conception and forthright in expression, fails to strike conviction in the intelligent reader. In conformity, therefore, with the well-known method used by the earliest of rabbinic interpreters, Arama employs his exegetical skill to mitigate, if not always to eliminate, the harshness of scriptural ideas which appear otherwise untenable and at times even repugnant. The device, though ingenious, is too familiar to startle. It consists of the studied attempt to read into the text a more acceptable, a more

[71] Ser. 75, p. 48.

noble, thought than is conveyed by its plain meaning. Thus, the bold and baffling assertion that "The Lord is a man of war,"[72] leads Arama to expound his favorite thesis that divine providence is not only general, as some thinkers would have us believe, but individual as well, embracing, to be sure, mankind as a whole, but not excluding the most insignificant member of the race. The great military leader, while chiefly concerned with the condition and conduct of the entire army, is keenly interested in the welfare of every single soldier under his command. Understood in this sense, the declaration that God is a military chief rises to great spiritual significance.[73] Again, God's promise immediately after the Flood not to cause the earth to be swept again by such waves of destruction, contains a reason for the resolve not altogether in harmony with our exalted view of human nature. Hence, the divine pronouncement: "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,"[74] the preacher strives to reread in the light of his own conception of man's nature and destiny. What we find in this verse, says Arama, is not a derogatory estimate of human nature as it stands revealed today, but rather a most unexpected tribute to man's nature since its emergence from the purifying waters of the primeval flood. For the term "man" is used here generically, meaning mankind, and "youth" therefore has reference to the early history of the race. The statement thus construed may well read: For the imagination of the heart of mankind is evil from its youth, that is to say, whatever of evil had entered into the soul of man had come from the early experience of the race, through the sin of Adam, which the deluge had completely washed away, thus leaving man purged,

[72] Ex. 15,3. [73] Ser. 40, p. 97.
[74] Gen. 8,21.

purified, transformed, altogether worthy of a happier lot than befell the generation of the Flood.[75]

The homiletical exegesis of Arama, however, is not confined to the literal plane. His verbal criticism, which bulks large in the unfoldment of his sermon, frequently invades the realm of the fanciful, the symbolical, the allegorical. For it is the contention of Arama, repeatedly put forth and forcefully defended, that certain sections of the Bible, especially its narrative portions, will yield only half their meaning, and none of their deeper significance, to the casual reader or to the devotee of literalism. We cannot assume, he argues, that all the countless inconsequential details with which so many of the pages of the Bible are cumbered, conceal no greater depths of thought than they reveal.[76] Moreover, our ancient interpreters blazed a new path for us when they chose on occasion to conceive of scriptural persons and objects as emblems of ideas and experiences of a later age.[77] Accordingly, while the masses of the people may rest content with the thought of a given text in its literal rendition, the trained mind of the student will forever strive to discern in it some metaphorical representation, thus adding the "honey" of original thought to the "milk" of transmitted truth.[78] If, then, Arama often resorts to symbolism in his exposition of the scriptural lesson, it is mainly because he wishes to infuse into his sermon a richer content, one that will instruct and delight the cultivated as well as the untrained. And, indeed, by the judicious use of this very ancient method, he not seldom succeeds in investing a dull, prosaic text with much poetic beauty.

It is impressive to note, though, the measure of restraint exercised by Arama in this ordinarily unrestricted field of

[75] Ser. 14, p. 167. [76] Ser. 25, p. 287.
[77] חזות קשה, Portal 11, p. 37. [78] שה"ש, pp. 18–19.

homiletical interpretation. To be sure, his penetrating eye never fails to detect the slightest resemblance between seemingly disparate ideas or objects, but there is usually much aptness and reasonableness in the likeness suggested. When, for instance, he discerns in the sacrificial cult a ceremonial institution emblematic of the sacrifices we must make in the effort to realize our spiritual ideals,[79] or when he envisages in the construction of the Tabernacle and in the coordination of its various parts a vast symbol of the social organism in its corporate and individual relations,[80] we cannot but sense the appropriateness of the comparison even if we incline to disrelish the elaborateness of the design. Even when addressing himself to the text: "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became four heads,"[81] he makes the four streams symbolize the four branches of human knowledge: mathematics, physics, theology and philosophy, respectively;[82] or when commenting on the verse: "It is better to dwell in a desert land than with a contentious and fretful woman,"[83] he also seeks to find in it confirmation of his thought that the study of Torah which hails from the "desert land," is rather to be sought than the mastery of metaphysics whose disputatiousness is strongly reminiscent of a "contentious and fretful woman,"[84] we are struck more with the ingenuousness of the preacher than with the artificiality of the homily. Surely, when he makes the Booth, with its prescribed measurements and scanty equipment, body forth the lesson of moderation, simplicity, and inner contentment,[85] we perceive a just likeness and a delicate touch of beauty in the accommodation. Nor is his use of the allegory devoid of distinctiveness and charm. In fact,

[79] Ser. 57, p. 12. [80] Ser. 48, p. 203; Ser. 49, p. 11; Ser. 56, p. 303.
[81] Gen. 2,10. [82] Ser. 7, p. 101; חזות קשה, Portal 10, p. 29.
[83] Prov. 21,19. [84] יד אבשלום, p. 69a. [85] Ser. 67, p. 181.

the consummate skill with which the rhetorical figure is extended and made to set forth the salient features of the inferred subject, must dissipate whatever unsavory sensations the whole strange process may induce in some readers. On the other hand, those who naturally delight in the allegorical method of presentation will be afforded in these sermons many an opportunity to indulge their special taste. If with them, as with the preacher, the superiority of theology over philosophy is a genuine conviction, they will relish their simple faith all the more keenly when Sarah is made to personify their favorite study and Hagar the philosophy of the schoolmen, thus dooming the latter to be the eternal handmaid of the former.[86] Should they, too, as no doubt did the preacher, harbor an unspeakable aversion for war and all military accounts, then the elaborate allegory in which the prescribed rules for the proper conduct of military campaigns[87] are applied in all their details to the spiritual conflicts within the individual soul, making the warrior called to the colors represent the heroic spirit battling against the evil forces within his own self,[88] will spare them the displeasure they fain would escape. For in all cases Arama strives, by means of the allegory, to give reality and vividness to some thought or spiritual state whose nature and validity may be only vaguely apprehended by the great mass of mankind.

This tendency of Arama to allegorize, while always held under admirable control and within reasonable bounds, is given somewhat freer rein in the rabbinical texts. Not that Arama ever deviates from his standard method of homiletical exegesis. His aim as expounder is always the same, not to distort the original meaning of his textual material but rather

[86] ח״ק, P. 11, p. 38; עק״י, Ser. 46, p. 173. [87] Deut. 20.
[88] Ser. 97, pp. 115–118.

to illumine it with the light of his own knowledge and understanding, so that the theme of his sermon may gain fresh emphasis and lustre. Yet the highly fanciful statements of the old Agadists seem to suggest, in some cases even to necessitate, the use of the allegorical method. In fact, one cannot be certain that these passages, with their rich imagery and picturesque phrases, express any thought that is simple and clear. One cannot escape the conviction that many of these statements must have been intended by their original authors for allegorical interpretation. In a word, they must have been written allegorically. Surely, the fantastic stories of Rabbah bar bar Ḥana, the interpretation of whose amazing adventures, often essayed by Isaac Arama,[89] has taxed the ingenuity of countless later preachers, could hardly be construed as factual statements. It is scarcely to be doubted that many an ancient preacher, even as this Babylonian Agadist, couched his thought in metaphorical language so as to achieve a definite artistic effect. One such Agadist, for example, in true poetic fashion conjures up a picture of two angelic escorts, the one of benevolent and the other of sinister nature, following every Jew as he wends his way from the synagogue, on the eve of the Sabbath. As they enter the home of their charge, if greeted by the customary Sabbath atmosphere, the benevolent angel with unalloyed joy invokes the benison of unbroken observance on future Sabbaths, to which the sinister angel, much against his will, responds with a lusty amen. The process is completely reversed when a week-day setting and mood greet the ethereal guests.[90] Now, in this passage, says Arama, we have a graphic portrayal of the eternal conflict within the human soul between the two forces of our nature, the good and the evil; and the thought accentuated is clearly this: that when the spirit of obedience

[89] Ser. 24, p. 276; Ser. 85, p. 195. [90] Šab. 119b.

prevails in our conduct, then the evil promptings of our nature, far from persisting in their clamorous desires, join hands with the victor for further triumphs in the future.[91] This interpretation may or may not fully coincide with the intended meaning of the author, but that some such thought is contemplated in the passage can hardly be questioned.

Of course, not all rabbinic statements allegorized by the preacher present the same high degree of inevitability which is exemplified in the above illustration. Often enough, the symbolic connotation, while avowedly unintended to supplant the plain and obvious meaning, is clearly superimposed, being neither natural nor necessary. But even in such cases, however artificial and incongruous the method, the thought Arama seeks to extract from the forced symbolism is always sound and impressive. To cite one example, perhaps the least defensible of the whole group, take the rabbinic statement concerning the proper disposal of the parings of fingernails. He who scatters them hither and thither, the teacher avers, betrays an evil nature; he who hides them from sight, discloses the temper of the righteous; and he who consigns them to the flame, acts as becomes a true saint.[92] After giving due recognition to its literal meaning and intention, Arama endeavors to extort from the passage a thought of deeper significance. Since nails, even as the talons of birds of prey, have often been used as the tools of spoliation, to grasp, to flay, to tear what others would and should have, they may be taken to symbolize the spirit of greed in the heart of man. The passage therefore deals with three divergent types of character as determined by the part greed plays in their daily conduct. The wicked man exercises his greedy nature at all times and in all places, casting its tokens, as it were, to all

[91] Ser. 47, p. 190.
[92] Nid. 17a.

sides; the righteous man has learned to control it, to keep it out of sight, so to speak; it is only the saint who has conquered and destroyed it.[93]

Thus, interpretation in its various forms constitutes the core of the "exposition," even as the minute analysis of ideas forms the essence of the "investigation." There is, however, another very important element that enters into the composition of Arama's sermon, one that is common to both of its component parts, and one, moreover, that reveals new powers in the preacher and invests his product with much literary charm. In fact, his proficiency in the art of interpretation is only matched by his mastery in the art of elucidation. It is Arama's undeviating practice, once his thought is stated and analyzed, or the construction of the text put forth and adequately supported, to fortify his thesis by means of popular illustrations; and it is in the aptness, variety, and effectiveness of these illustrations that some of the most engaging qualities of his style may be found. That his literary style stands in great need of some redemptive attribute, some saving grace, must be apparent to any reader of these sermons. There is, generally speaking, a woeful lack of lucidity of expression in his ponderous pages. Time and again, the cumbersome sentences, weighted with the metaphysical jargon and subtleties of the schoolmen, defy intelligent comprehension of propositions otherwise simple enough. Frequently, in sentences least involved, the utterance is too concise and cryptic to be intelligible.[94] While the structure of the whole is always good and the progress of ideas never

[93] Ser. 97, p. 120.

[94] It should be observed, in this connection, that without the aid of the commentary "The Fountain of Life" by H. J. Pollak, many a passage in these sermons would present insurmountable difficulties to many readers. Here and there, Pollak may have substituted his own thought for the thought of the author, but in the main his commentary is faithful and most helpful.

halted or delayed, the individual parts are often marred by an awkwardness and haziness of expression calculated to conceal more than it reveals. Yet, and this is the most amazing of contrasts, no sooner does the preacher turn his attention away from the philosophical basis, or authoritative sanction, of his thought, and proceed to amplify the theme of the sermon, supplying sundry illustrations of its more significant implications, than a startling change comes over the spirit of his composition. The erstwhile heavy and murky prose is suddenly transformed, as if by magic, into clear, simple, graceful lines, whose lyrical quality none will mistake. The preacher doffs, as it were, the sable cloak of the metaphysician, and wraps about him the variegated drapery of the poet.

His illustrative material is derived from three main sources. The first of these comprises some striking legends and stories related in the works of secular writers, to which the preacher refers when he desires to make more vivid and impressive a specific idea or truth emphasized in the sermon. Thus, to give poignancy to the thought that fear as a motive for religious action not only vitiates the individual act performed but tends to degrade the character and ultimately to induce the commission of heinous crimes, he turns to the tragic career of Alkmaeon. According to the Greek legend, Eriphyle, the mother of Alkmaeon, plotted against the life of Amphiaraos, her husband, by inciting him to wage war against Thebes. This sinister design the warrior somehow sensed; and before launching the campaign from which, he feared, he might not escape alive, he adjured his son to avenge this cruel wrong on his own mother. Accordingly, driven by a sense of fear to carry out the last wish of his father, Alkmaeon murdered the woman that bore him. This horrible crime never ceased to torment him. He wandered

from place to place, nowhere finding the peace and happiness for which his soul was yearning. In the end, on a lonely island, he was in turn slain by an assassin, thus bringing to a dreadful end a life of shame and anguish.[95]

Again, to stress the idea that Judaism demands absolute faith in God's unity, even when agonizing pain and most cruel death are visited upon us, Arama relates the story of the strange fate that befell Mani,[96] the founder of the Manichaean movement, in which the absurdity of the belief in dualism is clearly and pathetically demonstrated. The story relates that in the days of Constantine a teacher arose by the name of Mani who sought to mislead the people with the false doctrine that two powers, the one good and the other evil, dominated the fortunes of men. Once, together with a large host of his followers, Mani resolved to invade Babylon and make many converts for his faith. When the Babylonian king had heard of his ambitious plan, he cunningly dispatched emissaries to convey greetings to the leader and assure him of deep sympathy with his teachings. He also invited him and his disciples to come to the capital city and be the guests of the palace. Thus, at the head of four hundred followers, Mani arrived in the capital and was warmly received by the king. During a banquet tendered to his guests, the king's henchmen, by royal command, led the jolly strangers, few at a time, into the palace gardens, ostensibly for further entertainment, but in reality for mass execution. When all the disciples had thus been disposed of, Mani himself was taken by the king to the scene of carnage and bidden to behold in these horrors nothing but the triumph of the evil deity over his hated rival. The king also took the liberty to suggest to the crestfallen leader that under the circumstances he could do no better than join his faithful followers. Whereupon he, too,

[95] Ser. 92, p. 58. [96] 240–286 C. E.

was seized and slain, thus sealing with his own life-blood the fate of the absurd doctrine.[97]

A second source on which Arama depends for his illustrative material is the analogy, in which personal observation plays the chief role. Thus, the harm done to a community by the occasional lapses of a high-principled, prominent citizen, contends the preacher, is greater than the evil that comes to it from the misdeeds of an ordinary, obscure person. The fall from a powerful, fast-galloping steed, will prove more injurious to the rider than a similar fall from a slow-trotting nag.[98] Or, the Torah, while revealed to a single generation at a specific period in our history, was intended for all ages to come, to the very end of time. When one builds a water-mill by a fast-flowing stream, he takes into account a larger body of water than what at any given moment may rush over its wheels and keep them in motion.[99] Again, spiritual perfection cannot be attained by one supreme effort, or by a single method. It is an achievement, if at all consummated, that must be the result of a long and slow process of arduous experimentation. One who purposes to reach the pinnacle of a high tower will surely fall short of his aim if he expects to accomplish the ascent by a single leap. Only the man wise enough to know that he must build a ladder for himself and forthwith begin the laborious climb upward, rung by rung, can ever hope to reach the top.[100]

There is yet a third source upon which Arama draws for the materials of his illustrations, a source which originates in the mind of the preacher and is fed by his creative imagination. It consists of narratives or descriptions allegorically conceived. In their shorter forms we know them as parables; in their more elaborate and extensive forms we may simply designate

[97] Ser. 90, p. 41. [98] Ser. 78, p. 91.
[99] Ser. 89, p. 33. [100] Ser. 92, p. 63.

them as allegorical stories. These parables and stories are quite numerous in the sermons of Arama and are, as a rule, of the author's own invention. When, on occasion, he reproduces an allegorical episode from some story-book,[101] or amplifies an old parable to make it more applicable to his particular theme,[102] he indicates the fact, if not the specific source. Some of these parables and stories, while solely intended to give added clarity and force to an idea in the sermon, may be viewed as complete products in themselves, possessing all the essential qualities of an independent composition. As narratives, they are conceived with care and discrimination and told with simplicity and charm. They are of diverse lengths and of varying degrees of skilfulness, but none is lacking in interest and impressiveness. Thus, for example, in bemoaning the pitiful condition of the Jew who becomes so immersed in the material affairs of life as to forget that he belongs to a "kingdom of priests" and is therefore by virtue of his priestly function a "messenger of the Lord of hosts," the preacher adds poignancy to the situation by comparing it with the tragic plight of the man in the following parable: The men of a certain province, because of the great confidence every one reposed in him, chose one of their most reputable and public-spirited citizens to appear before the king in his far-off capital and plead with him in behalf of the entire province for a number of very necessary improvements. They provided him with all the needed funds, and sped him on his way with the fondest blessings of an affectionate people. The trusted messenger, after a long journey, arrived in the spacious metropolis and was fascinated with the sights he saw. Moreover, he was deeply impressed with the thriving commerce of the city, and perceived numerous opportunities for profitable ventures. Lured by the many

[101] Ser. 62, p. 81. [102] Ser. 100, p. 167.

prospects of the city, he delayed making his appearance in the palace of the king, until at last the whole purpose of his mission vanished from his thoughts. Instead, he eagerly plunged into the commercial life of the new community, and prospered greatly. As his profits grew, his confidence increased, and with it his pride. It was not long, however, before the reverses of fortune began to assail him. One disastrous venture followed another, until in the end a ship that carried in its cargo most of his substance sank amid sea, leaving him utterly ruined and helpless. In his despair, he decided to retrace his steps to his native place. But what an indignant community arose to meet him! "How could you," they hurled at him, "betray for a handful of coins the vital interests of your own province? How could you sacrifice the welfare of your neighbors and friends in order to satisfy a selfish ambition? Where was your sense of loyalty, your sense of pride, your sense of duty?" Their ire thus kindled, they were unable to forgive him this act of treachery. They seized upon his person and mercilessly put him to death.[103]

Ordinarily, the completion of the "exposition" marks also the conclusion of the sermon. The standard method of the preacher, it would seem, required the continuous application of his message in the body of the sermon. Thus, as is often the case, in the very midst of his sermon he will pause to say: "I have seen fit to make a number of observations with reference to this scriptural passage, that we may learn from it lessons of importance concerning the right conduct of life

[103] Ser. 63, p. 86.—Some of his best allegorical stories are too long to be conveniently reproduced here. Suffice it to say, however, that in sheer beauty of diction and power of imagination they rise to a high literary plane. Of this class of composition, the following will be found good specimens: Ser. 101, pp. 178–185; Ser. 99, pp. 155–56; Ser. 91, pp. 47–48. His parables may be represented by the following: Ser. 18, p. 205; Ser. 23, p. 266; Ser. 52, p. 241; Ser. 70, p. 224.

and the proper attitude we must take toward repentance and prayer."[104] Not infrequently, however, Arama concludes his sermon with the compact application of its ethical and spiritual truth. "Our purpose in this sermon," he says in the closing lines of one such representative sermon, "has been fully met when, in the discussion of all the related themes, we have called attention to that which constitutes true uprightness. Thus shall our people have learned to abhor the evil and cherish the good. Verily, this principle, and none other, lies at the foundation of the good life."[105] But whatever be the method Arama chooses to follow in bringing his sermon to a close, in all instances he delivers a weighty and timely message to his people, a message that has not lost its appeal with the passing of the years.

4

In the medieval Synagogue, the religious message of the pulpit issued from men who stood before the people as interpreters of transmitted truth. The preacher was the expounder and spokesman of the traditional faith, from whose sacred literature he drew the doctrines he taught and the principles of conduct he stressed. Yet, despite the fixed character of his work and the defined scope of his views, his utterances, as embodied in the best homiletical efforts, lacked neither the fervor of personal feeling nor the freshness of spontaneous thought. The truth he enunciated, though part of an age-old tradition, seemed to well forth from his own consciousness. The lesson he taught, he himself had learned; yet what he gave, appeared to come from his own soul. With all his deep-rooted reverence for the past, he was no mere purveyor of conventional truth; intense personal conviction, born of habitual study and contemplation and fortified by a

[104] Ser. 78, p. 98. [105] Ser. 85, p. 196.

rigorous discipline of consecrated living, vibrated throughout the message of the preacher.

In the sermons of Arama, especially, this striking paradox meets us with great force. No other homiletical work that has come down to us from the Middle Ages, contains such a comprehensive exposition of Jewish thought and belief. Arama was unquestionably the greatest exponent of traditional Judaism in the medieval pulpit. Yet in the pages of the עקדת יצחק, we shall find no trace of a cold, conventional faith. Every sermon breathes the spirit of independent thought and the sentiments of an authentic personal experience.

It is quite evident that the strictest adherence to an inherited faith, unless it degenerate into blind obedience, may be compatible with the purest ratiocination of a compelling philosophy. In fact, Arama, and this holds true also of other preachers of his stamp, while believing where he could not prove, never failed to sift all the available evidence both for and against any theological doctrine he urged upon others to accept. Even the truth of those premises which men of faith have always found indispensable to their thinking, Arama sought to demonstrate, not alone with appeals to authority but with rational proof as well. In a word, the religious teachings inculcated upon his mind became by a prolonged process of searching and probing his very own, a vital part of himself. Hence, when he spoke it was with the voice of a triumphant personal faith.

Yet, since Arama's religious outlook harmonized so completely with the norms of traditional thought and belief, any attempt to reconstruct the edifice of his faith would only result in a duplication of the structure of Judaism itself, a task neither necessary nor feasible. In our exposition of his message, therefore, we shall limit ourselves to a brief presentation of those theological views and ethical principles

which receive most frequent emphasis in his sermons, and which at the same time reveal most clearly the essential qualities of his heart and mind.

The bed-rock of Arama's views and beliefs is the supreme fact of Revelation. Judaism, he repeatedly contends, is a religion of divinely-revealed truth. To be sure, reason as employed by the philosophical mind is indispensable to a fuller comprehension of the meaning and deeper import of the sacred Word. Only a simpleton will invoke faith where further exploration is indicated. Yet only the intellectual swaggerer will have the effrontery to set up his own mind as the touchstone of divine truth.[106] Philosophy is the servant of theology, and not its master.[107] Philosophy relies solely on the evidences of our reason, but revelation transcends reason; and when the mind is baffled by some religious mystery, it is because its power is incommensurate with the greatness of the task before it.[108] The phenomenon of prophecy, for example, despite the attempt of Maimonides to invest it with naturalness and plausibility, still looms as a great mystery, not so much because the explanations thus far given fail to satisfy the mind, but mainly because we know that it is a manifestation of something that lies outside the limited range of the human intellect.[109] It is to the everlasting credit of Christian theologians that while convinced of the validity and usefulness of philosophical analysis and quite eager to employ its methods in their own studies, they resolutely refuse to follow its conclusions when these go counter to the principles of the established faith. They justly claim that in assuming to arbitrate on questions of faith, philosophy is overstepping its natural boundaries.[110] Philosophy deals with

[106] Ser. 79, p. 104. [107] ח״ק, P. 7, p. 21; Ser. 46, p. 171.
[108] יד אבשלום, Prov. 14, p. 43b; Prov. 25, p. 84b; עק״י, Ser. 1, p. 27.
[109] Ser. 19, pp. 214–215; Ser. 35, p. 17. [110] ח״ק, P. 7, p. 21.

the things we know and can know; theology is concerned with those truths which only a perfect faith can fully discern.[111] Hence, with us, the recipients of the Torah, philosophy must always occupy a subordinate position, ministering to our intellectual needs as best it may, but leaving the content of our faith unaltered. For, as a guide to belief and conduct, our Torah is unique and most adequate. Greece, with all its famed philosophers, can boast of no such comprehensive system of thought, nor of any single work that possesses the internal and external perfection of Israel's Torah.[112] Yet, strange to say, many of our people take more pride in the fact that they dabble in philosophy, ignorant as they seem to be of its rudimentary principles, than of the fact that they are students of Bible or Talmud.[113]

And what is it that the Torah tries to teach us? First of all, it posits the truth that one God created and dominates the whole universe. Of course, this cardinal principle of our faith has attained the widest acceptance in our time. Untold millions lift their eyes heavenward, beseeching a just God to deliver them from the injustices of men.[114] Even those thinkers who reject the belief in divine revelation, seem convinced of the truth of this doctrine. With only reason as guide, they yet arrive at the same conclusion. Step by step, they go from nature to God, reaching the mount of the Lord on the ladder of causation.[115] Yet differences of a fundamental character separate the believer from the mere thinker. With us, creation is the voluntary, joyous act of God. He is master of the things His hands have wrought. He lives in the world He has formed, and refashions it at will. But the philosopher

[111] Ser. 21, pp. 233, 235; ח"ק P. 3, p. 9.
[112] Ser. 46, p. 172; Ser. 7, p. 95; Ser. 1, p. 30.
[113] יד אבשלום, Prov. 8, p. 24b. [114] Ser. 67, p. 164.
[115] Ser. 77, p. 63; Ser. 67, p. 154.

who rises to a vision of God by clambering the spiral ascent of cause and effect, discerns nothing but grim necessity in control of the forces of nature. The God he discloses is powerless in His own universe. He is himself governed by an inner compulsion. He can change nothing that flows from His being. Of what benefit can such a conception of God be to us?[116] Moreover, we who begin with God, whose nature is limned for us on the broad canvas of Revelation, and proceed to unlock the mystery of the human soul with this our knowledge of the divine, discover qualities in man which transfigure our lives.[117] Partaking of the divine nature, we are seen to possess freedom of choice. We are not the slaves of external conditions; we are free moral agents.[118] The philosopher, on the other hand, who designates God as the First Cause and endeavors to understand His nature by learning to know the inner workings of man's soul, succeeds only in engulfing our own spirits in the ceaseless stream of necessity. Our wills, he concludes, are fettered by predetermined conditions. Whatever is, must be. Accident, and not Providence, rules our lives.[119]

We who live by the light of the Torah, conceive of God as the architect of our destiny and the supreme goal of our striving. We spurn any limitation put on God's power. Our individual lives, we believe, are under His constant supervision. Those who think that God is too exalted a being to concern Himself with the trivialities of man's existence, insisting therefore that only the larger welfare of the race comes under His direct control, harbor a mistaken notion of Providence.[120] The eyes of heaven are always upon us. The man of

[116] Ser. 48, pp. 202, 204; Ser. 39, p. 80; ח"ק P. 5, p. 15.
[117] Ser. 68, p. 193. [118] Ser. 56, p. 294; Ser. 49, p. 412.
[119] Ser. 63, p. 84; Ser. 74, p. 35; יד אבשלום, הקדמה, p. 3.
[120] Ser. 43, p. 125; Ser. 49, p. 212; Ser. 52, p. 245.

intelligence, therefore, as he views the vast panorama unfolded before his gaze, in comparison with which his own pride and ambitious strivings sink into utter insignificance, will rivet his thoughts on the real purpose of our existence, which is none other than the whole-hearted dedication of all our powers to the service of God.[121] He will endeavor, on all occasions, to bend his will to God's will, that he may thus obtain inner harmony and a large measure of spiritual freedom.[122] For a man need but play upon the harp of his own soul to produce harmonious music.[123] We do not share the conviction of some alien teachers who assert that man's soul is by nature unclean and vicious, and that our chief task in life is to purge the impurities native to our spirits. We rather affirm the belief that man's soul comes pure from God; that we bear no stains from birth; and that our task is not to polish the soul but to keep it from becoming tarnished.[124] Nor does the salvation of the world lie outside the pale of the individual soul; let each man strive for self-perfection, and the redemption of the world will be assured.[125] What if man is made of flesh and blood? The essence of his being, what he really is, issues from his own efforts. Out of the nucleus given him at birth he can develop an intelligent soul of great power, a new and unique creation to which his own blood-relations are but strangers.[126]

But to fashion this spiritual personality, it is necessary to live one's life in strict conformity with the injunctions and restrictions of the Torah. For the function of its precepts and ordinances is largely disciplinary, to curb passion and bridle inordinate desire for sensuous pleasures.[127] The physical is

[121] Ser. 57, p. 10. [122] Ser. 98, p. 135.

[123] Ser. 70, p. 229. [124] Ser. 68, p. 195.

[125] Ser. 56, p. 305. [126] Ser. 66, p. 142.

[127] Ser. 44, p. 55; see also Ser. 20, p. 227—"How often have I endeavored to emphasize this point, especially in its bearing on the problem of prostitu-

necessary and worthy of all the attention we give to it, but it must be made to minister to the needs of the spirit. Heaven and earth are upheld by each other and thus needed for each other's existence, but to the aspiring soul not earth but heaven is life's supreme objective. The material is to the spiritual what the scaffolding is to the slowly rising edifice, indispensable for its completion, but extraneous to its later uses.[128] It is therefore most painful to behold men of high destiny so completely engrossed in the sordid pursuit after worldly riches that they seem scarcely aware of the existence of higher aims and ends. They make gods of material success and prosperity and lie prostrate before them, as if there were no God in heaven, and as though His will were still unknown to men. Is not this the very breath and substance of paganism?[129] Of course, no one is exempt from the duty to labor for his own sustenance and the comforts of those dependent on him. Our great men of old, while placing their trust in God, never failed to exert their own powers to improve the conditions amidst which they lived.[130] To be practical and provident is not necessarily to be wanting in faith. On the con-

---

tion which, sad to say, the leaders of our generation treat with such leniency. Why, in some communities these prostitutes are welcomed, even subsidies from public funds are allotted to them, because it is claimed, they save the unmarried or the unintelligent from the graver offense of having sexual relations with married women, or from the danger incident to the molestation of non-Jewish women, thus choosing the lesser of two possible evils. And time and again, in the presence of these leaders, have I given expression to my own adverse views regarding this matter, contending that there is a vast difference between a sin of which an individual is guilty in the secrecy of his private life, and a sin countenanced by the community at large. In the former case only the individual sinner is subject to punishment, whereas, in the latter case, however small the offense, it is the community that draws guilt upon itself and is liable to certain punishment."

[128] Ser. 85, p. 190.

[129] Ser. 45, p. 164; Ser. 41, p. 106; Ser. 6, p. 84; Ser. 32, p. 386.

[130] Ser. 26, p. 308.

trary, it may often result in increased capacity for further spiritual cultivation. Surely, young men who rush headlong into matrimony before they can support a family, before they have even reached maturity, are guilty not only of great folly but also of reckless disregard for the very conditions on which their mental and moral growth must depend.[131] But there is a vast difference between the man who labors to procure the necessary comforts of life and the man who ceaselessly scrambles for its luxuries and superfluities. The latter, forgetting the end in the means, forfeits the privilege of realizing within himself the higher possibilities of his nature.[132]

The Mosaic laws and the religious institutions and practices of later times, which comprise the main features of Jewish life, were designed primarily to safeguard the native purity of the soul and assure the uninterrupted development of its latent powers. The elaborate dietary laws, for example, deny us the use of certain foods, like the flesh of beast or unclean animal, that our blood may not be infected with the ferocity of the brute; that our reason may not suffer the dullness and obfuscation induced by overpowering passion; that our spirits may not be defiled. To be sure, the unimpaired inner nature of a man will endue with health and vigor all his physical organs, but this result while inevitable is incidental and forms no part of the legislator's intention.[133] Similarly, the institution of the Sabbath in its positive and negative aspects contemplates the creation of opportunities for spiritual enrichment. It makes the abstention from all manner of work obligatory, but bodily relaxation is not its goal. The Sabbath is essentially a day of inner restoration and sanctification. It summons us to serious study and solemn meditation, that we

[131] Ser. 22, p. 257; Ser. 23, p. 270.
[132] Ser. 62, p. 79; Ser. 41, p. 107; Ser. 4, p. 71.
[133] Ser. 60, pp. 57–58.

may grow in knowledge and sanctity.[134] In fact, all our Festivals are feast-days of the soul. Their chief purpose is to make us more keenly conscious of the divine quality of our human inheritance. The very seasons of the year from which they derive their tone and color, evidence the personal character of their spiritual appeal. The Feast of Passover, while commemorating our liberation from Egyptian bondage, also speaks to our individual souls of our first entry into the world, of the springtime period in our lives, when the torch of the spirit rose high and burned bright; even as the Feast of Tabernacles in the autumn of the year, with its stored harvests and extemporaneous booths, casts before us the lengthening shadow of coming gloom, prophetic of the time, so fast approaching, when after the completion of life's labors we shall be called to leave our fixed habitations and make our abode with the dead.[135] Such occasions bid us pause in the midst of our joy and consider the mystery of birth and death, of life and destiny. They are moments of revelation. And what shall we say of those religious exercises which appear unrelated to the practical experiences of life? Surely, these could be intended for no other purpose than to stimulate the soul and strengthen its powers. The "fringes" or "phylacteries," for example, associated as they are exclusively with our sense of God's presence in the world, aim to keep alive within us the thought of our higher relationship and worth and end.[136] Likewise, prayer and repentance can have for us but one function, to cleanse our hearts and ennoble our conduct.[137] Of course, when, after we have done all we could for ourselves, we put our trust in God and lay our supplications before Him, we may be confident that He will hear our cry and save us.[138] Yet prayer,

[134] Ser. 55, pp. 287–288.
[135] Ser. 59, pp. 32–34.
[136] Ser. 49, p. 212.
[137] Ser. 63, p. 110.
[138] Ser. 26, p. 308.

like sacrifice, has ends beyond itself. It is a tree of many branches and much fruit. It is rooted in faith in God, faith in His providence and power; and out of this root there spring up such glorious virtues as reverence and devotion, love and humility, purity and holiness, and, above all, consecration unto God.[139] Even some of the early *piyuṭim*, inasmuch as they stir the emotions of the worshipper and direct his thoughts to earnest contemplation, partake of this nature and function of prayer;[140] though the newer style in liturgical poetry, which has debased its original quality, renders its continued use in the Synagogue highly undesirable.[141] This is the reason why, in Judaism, *kawana*, pure devotion as opposed to mechanical performance, is of such paramount importance. Perfunctoriness, ostentation and hypocrisy destroy piety and blur our vision of God.[142]

Thus, the Torah provides us not only with robust principles of faith but also with a regimen of daily living, which is calculated to preserve the health and purity of the soul. Even the rabbis of the Talmud, it should be noted, while preoccu-

[139] Ser. 58, p. 21. [140] Ser. 105, pp. 232, 233.

[141] יד אבשלום, Prov. 31, p. 108.—While stoutly defending the occasional arrangement of biblical verses in alphabetical order, such as may be encountered in Lamentations, Proverbs and Psalms, Arama condemns unsparingly the use of the acrostic in the later *piyuṭim*. The employment of the former, he claims, was at times made necessary in order to attest to the inspired character of the work. This occurred whenever the author was unduly depressed, as in Lamentations, or too practical in his outlook, as in Proverbs, or too embittered by personal experiences, as in Psalms. In all the above instances, the alphabetical scheme tended to allay suspicion as to the authenticity of the work by pointing to its purely Hebraic character. But there is no justification, he contends, for the acrostic with its emphasis on the name of the author and his genealogy. Some of these efforts, notably the one by Solomon Ibn Gabirol for the Atonement service, reek with pride of authorship and convey no intelligible religious ideas. "In places where I used to officiate," he concludes his strictures, "I insisted on the omission of these liturgical pieces."

[142] Ser. 59, p. 42; Ser. 98, p. 145.

pied with the most practical issues of life, aimed at something higher and nobler than a well-regulated economic order; the compelling motive of their activities, too, was intensely spiritual, nothing less than the perfection of the human soul, which in their opinion could be achieved only in a society built on sound social relations.[143] Fortified by this knowledge, we shall obey implicitly all the injunctions prescribed for us, whether they satisfy the demands of our reason or not. Any attempt to rationalize the laws of the Torah must eventually lead to their complete nullification.[144] The Torah in its entirety, its narrative as well as legal portions, represents a species of truth that transcends the powers of human reason. The student of the Torah, therefore, while assiduous in his search for a deeper thought than is visible on the surface,[145]

[143] Ser. 46, p. 179. [144] Ser. 79, p. 109.

[145] Whenever Arama stresses the thought that in biblical episodes or statements we shall find more significant ideas than the literal rendition permits us to see, it must not be imagined that he has reference to the mystical notions and interpretations of the Kabbalists. His attitude toward the Kabbalah, while not exactly hostile, was by no means sympathetic. He frequently quotes from the Zohar, but he never bases his appeal on any of its conclusions. When citing a passage from the Zohar, for example, in which the author insists that only one who is thoroughly versed in the mysteries of the Shofar shall be qualified to sound it in the synagogue, Arama merely contents himself with adding that since the men of our time are ignorant of such mysteries, we can do no more than insist that these congregational "messengers" shall be expert in the use of the Shofar, that they shall know the meaning of the prayers they recite, and, above all, that they shall perform their duty in a devotional spirit (Ser. 67, p. 170). On another occasion, in discussing a mystical reason, suggested in the Zohar, for the institution of the levirate marriage, Arama confesses that the reason given seems very strange to him, due no doubt to his weak powers of comprehension or to the profundity of the idea presented, declaring, however, that a more simple and less nebulous explanation is ready at hand (Ruth, p. 8). Again, referring to the claim of Naḥmanides in his commentary to the Pentateuch that in the light of a kabbalistic statement a certain biblical verse loses its obscure character, Arama curtly dismisses the assertion with the humble declaration that such matters he is entirely too ignorant to grasp (Ser. 55, p. 284). Moreover, certain kabbalistic enterprises he frankly

will at no time venture to relinquish his belief in the truth of any incident described or statement of fact given.[146] Of course, for the large mass of our people, incapable of deeper penetration, the plain recital of events in its stark literalness will have to suffice; but, then, the most innocent faith will serve a more useful purpose than all the doubts and bold denials of a barren dialecticism.[147] The "rationalists" in our midst, who forever strive to harmonize biblical truth with philosophical thought, often so dilute the content of the Torah that it ceases to have any strength or validity. In this respect they are worse than the Christians who seek repeatedly to buttress their new doctrines with citations from our Bible, thus attesting to their absolute faith in the divine character of its authority.[148] The "rationalists," on the other hand, relying on the methods and conclusions of Greek philosophy, endeavor to eliminate from the Torah the miraculous and the mysterious, thus undermining its whole structure.[149]

---

frowns upon. He condemns, for instance, all attempts to compute the time when the Messiah will come (*Ibid.* p. 296). It is quite evident that Arama was no devotee of the exotic and esoteric. He loved to delve deep into the simplest scriptural passage in the hope that he might thus uncover a fresh and exhilarating thought.

[146] ח"ק, P. 10, p. 28. [147] Ser. 45, p. 160.

[148] ח"ק, P. 8, pp. 22–23.

[149] Ser. 13, pp. 155–159.—The "rationalists" whom he frequently mentions and attacks with much vehemence, are the well-known thinkers and commentators, Moses ben Joshua of Narbonne (died 1362), and Levi ben Gershon (1288–1344). Of the former's commentary to Maimmuni's *Guide*, Arama speaks in rather unrestrained language. On one occasion, referring to an especially irritating statement of this commentator, the preacher declares that "it ought to be consigned to the flames, together with all his other writings," adding that if he refrains from quoting the passage in question it is mainly because he has no desire "to pollute the atmosphere" (Ser. 54, p. 267). Elsewhere, he makes the charge that it is this author's mental habit to stamp as impure everything that is pure, as unfit everything that is fit, and, above all, to expose defects hidden from the naked eye (Ser. 57, p. 7). In somewhat more measured terms, but with equal impatience, he combats the strenuous at-

God showed unto Israel His great favor when He entrusted him with the Torah; though the strength of His great love did not become fully manifest until He saw fit to give him also such religious institutions as the Holy Days, which in addition to bringing joy into his life embody the salient ideas of Judaism.[150] The Torah, then, with its laws and institutions, is the spiritual patrimony of the Jew, and constitutes the evidence of his superiority among the nations.[151] As a people whose chief possession is the Torah, it is our task by the ways of our life to be a light-giving force in the moral ascent of the race, even as the sun with its great powers of illumination and renewal revives and fructifies the earth.[152] In fact, this may be said to be the primary purpose of our dispersion among the nations of the earth, that by our example the whole world may learn to recognize the potency and beneficence of our Law and its lofty principles of human conduct.[153] To be sure, the community of Israel itself has not attained as yet unto that perfection of character which it is destined to reach; but when placed side by side with other existing groups, it may well boast of a large measure of goodness and uprightness. Indeed, there is much Israel can give the world; "and how passionately he yearns for the opportunity to serve his God and live by His commandments in the sight of all men, instead of being constrained, as he is today in the lands of his exile, to practise his religion in hidden places, lest he be mocked and terrorized by his gentile neighbors."[154] Of course,

---

tempts of Levi ben Gershon, in his מלחמות ה', to rationalize some of the most notable miracles recorded in the Bible (Ser. 73, pp. 155–157).

[150] Ser. 67, pp. 157, 164. [151] Ser. 82, p. 159.

[152] Ser. 66, p. 146.

[153] Ser. 60, p. 58.

[154] שה"ש, p. 1.—Amid the gloom and pathos enveloping Jewish life in the diaspora, Arama finds cause for gratitude in the fact that in all countries the Jews are regarded as "subjects of the king," enjoying thereby a more favor-

there can be no doubt but that the persecutions directed against us serve a beneficent purpose. What our religious discipline has failed to accomplish, persecution and oppression bid fair to achieve; they do seem to help weaken the hold materialistic ambitions and desires have on our souls.[155] The insufferable burdens we have to shoulder, even as the primeval Flood that swept away a wicked generation, must have been intended by God for our spiritual regeneration, that a clear vision of our human destiny might be kindled in our hearts.[156] Yet there is this striking anomaly: the bitter life in exile, which tends by its very struggles and hardships to awaken in us a keener sense of our true aims, is also responsible for the slow progress we are making toward the greater perfection of our spirits. In the diaspora, exposed as we are to many alien influences of a deleterious nature, we cannot hope to expedite the process of our spiritual transformation. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly evident that unless we achieve physical liberation, both in the political and economic spheres, we shall not attain the spiritual emancipation we so hopefully anticipate.[157]

Meanwhile, our strength is actually waning. On the one hand, thousands, yea, tens of thousands are leaving our ranks, surrendering the old loyalties under the pressure of cruel decrees. That these apostates have found no peace and happiness in the change, is tragically clear. They are despised and humiliated everywhere, eternal objects of suspicion and hate and cruel vindictiveness. They are hounded and tortured in all the provinces of Spain. Those who have escaped the consuming flames are hunting for safe hiding-places, and those

---

able position than would have been theirs had they been reduced to the status of slaves, to be bought and sold in the open market (Ser. 98, p. 150).

[155] Ser. 23, p. 271. [156] Ser. 33, p. 398.

[157] Ser. 28, p. 334.

who may still be seen at their accustomed tasks are the victims of a paralyzing fear that defies description.[158] Then, on the other hand, there are many in our midst who, though they have not renounced the ancient faith, pay no heed to the religious duties devolving upon them as Jews. Neither in character nor in mental outlook do they exhibit any influence of Judaism's teachings; they are Jews only in name.[159] They belittle the value of Jewish knowledge, and extol the wisdom of Aristotle. They admonish the Jewish youth not to fritter away their time in talmudic studies but to devote themselves rather to the study of Greek philosophy. They try to win the confidence of these untrained and inexperienced lads by regaling them with some flashy philosophical observations and by initiating them into the free-and-easy habits of the secular student.[160] Thus, amidst the distressing conditions of our life, which call for the utmost strength and fortitude, they seek to

[158] Ser. 98, pp. 149–150.—It seems that the forced conversion of the Spanish Jews gave rise on occasion to some interesting theological questions. One such instance arose when the former wife of a Jewish apostate, who remained loyal to her faith, insisted on obtaining the traditional bill of divorcement from her neo-Christian spouse. The Christian clergy argued that since conversion spelled a new-birth her former husband was as non-existent to his Jewish wife as if he had actually died. A Jewish divine took the stand that birth, and not doctrinal loyalty, was the determining factor in the human personality. Arama sided with the latter point of view, though in the talmudic maxim that "a proselyte is like a new-born babe" he sensed some support for the contrary view. He, too, contends that a Jew is one by birth, and that not even apostasy can obscure his Jewish origin. Yet he perceives the difficulty involved in trying to convince representatives of the Church, with whom the doctrine of conversion admitted of no discussion, of the validity and justness of the Jewish appraisal of personality. He suggests, therefore, a different line of reasoning, in which the main points are that while conversion may work a radical change in one's individuality, it cannot divest him of his humanity; that marriage involves a purely human relationship as well as a union of souls consecrated by religion; and that as a man, therefore, the Jewish apostate still owed conjugal obligations to the woman of his choice (Ser. 97, pp. 130–131).

[159] Ser. 60, p. 55. [160] Ser. 46, p. 173.

weaken our stamina and destroy our will to live as Jews by fostering interests and views so perilous to our religious discipline.[161] They forget, however, the truth verified by their own historical experience, that Israel lived in freedom and independence only when he subjected his life to the will of God, and that whenever he sought to free himself from the "yoke of the heavenly kingdom" he found himself bearing the yoke of slavery imposed on him by foreign powers.[162]

Yet, Israel need not despair. The love God has for His people can never be extinguished. God has not forsaken us; we have forsaken our God. We need but return unto Him to have His love restored to us.[163] Superficially, it would appear as if the taunt of the gentiles that we are the rejected of God were indisputably true. For fourteen long centuries we have been wanderers on the earth, driven from our ancient glories, exiled from our home. But history discounts the importance of arguments based on mere duration. An interval of over two thousand years separated the creation of the world from the consecration of Israel at Sinai. No, the length of the term of our exile holds no discouragement for us.[164] We can discern a special providence in the fact that it is among Christian and Mohammedan nations that we are scattered. For, in whatever distorted a form, our Torah has become the property of these nations; at least, they subscribe to the essential principles of our faith. We are thus privileged to live in an environment in which, though we suffer much sorrow and pain, the perpetuation of Judaism is assured.[165] The times in which we live challenge our best efforts. We who have accepted the "yoke of His kingdom" must labor incessantly for the ever-increasing perfection of our souls. Therein we shall find our

[161] ח"ק, P. 12, p. 47.
[162] Ser. 98, p. 138.
[163] Ser. 48, p. 202.
[164] Ser. 88, p. 24.
[165] *Ibid.* p. 26.

greatest freedom. We dare not become the slaves of greed and pleasure. When we withdraw from life's luxuries, we shall draw closer to God's presence. Our present task is to cultivate a love for the simple life, that we may be free for the study of God's law and the faithful performance of our religious duties. We belong to a people designated as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"; we should live as becomes the subjects of such a kingdom.[166]

5

Arama addressed his message to the men of his own generation, but the influence of his work and spirit is still with us. It lives in every Jewish pulpit in which the preacher's art is still practised. From him preaching in the Synagogue received some of its best-known qualities. It was Arama who gave to the Jewish sermon its intellectual character. If later preachers strove to make ideas the foundation-stones of their homiletical structure, it was because Arama was their best teacher. The עקדת יצחק taught them that scriptural truth, to be plumbed to its utmost depth, required much power of concentration, and that religious ideas, to win ready assent, called for the steady cultivation of the habit of thought. From this work, the most popular preacher's manual, they also learned that the sermon was an organic whole, in which some dominating idea controlled its separate parts. Nor were they slow to perceive from a careful study of these sermons, that preaching was an art in which the exercise of the imagination and pictorial power promised to achieve effects of great moral value. Truth is cold until warmed by emotion; thought is dull and drab until tinged with the vivid colors of the imagination. This lesson they could not escape as they pondered over the pages of their favorite preacher. But Arama, the preacher's

[166] Ser. 69, p. 209; Ser. 77, p. 68; Ser. 78, p. 100.

preacher, did more than help vitalize the substance, and broaden the technique, of the sermon; by his work he quickened the spirit and refined the personality of the Jewish preacher. His reverence, his piety, his faith, his spiritual discernment, his passion for right-living, his quenchless thirst for God, inspired subsequent synagogal teachers with a sense of the lofty character of their calling, and revealed to them the secret of the pulpit's power and influence. That so many of the old preachers who came under the influence of his sermons followed his footsteps and breathed his spirit, testifies to the endless triumphs of prophetic consecration.

V.

JUDAH MOSCATO

Child of the Renaissance

I

IN the history of Jewish preaching, Judah Moscato occupies a unique position. He perfected the form, and transfigured the substance, of the Jewish sermon. He raised it to the level of a distinct literary art. Even in the ancient homily there were not lacking beauty of expression and profound moral feeling; but in the composite character in which it has come down to us, we fail to discern true unity of thought and uninterrupted progression of ideas, elements so essential in a sustained literary effort. The midrashic homilies abound in excellences of various sorts: in rich religious sentiment, in fine poetic insight, in succinct, striking, fascinating language; but these appear like sudden flashes, brilliant but sporadic, illuminating the theme for a brief moment but seldom furthering its logical development. They are not climaxes in a thought; they are sparks escaping from the rock when the darshan's hammer falls heavily upon it.[1] In the transition period, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, we see the Jewish sermon struggle toward fuller independence, seeking to achieve a larger measure of structural completeness and a more varied, if not richer, content. But to evolve out of the traditional homily as embodied in the latest midrashic compilations, often disjointed and lacking in progressive continuity, a well-sustained, unified discourse, unfolding some one central theme with logical sequence and linguistic precision, proved a more

[1] Sanh. 34a.

difficult task than homiletical ingenuity alone could successfully cope with. Outside aid was urgently needed, and, in many cases, diligently sought. The Revival of Learning in Europe, which opened up new sources of knowledge and breathed a new spirit into the thinking world, afforded the Jewish preacher, too, fresh accessions of material as well as superior models of literary excellence. Jacob Anatoli, in the thirteenth century, Baḥya ben Asher, in the fourteenth century, and Isaac Arama, in the fifteenth century, for example, widely divergent as they were in their style and method of preaching, possessed, among others, this characteristic in common, that along with their mastery of the Jewish sources they brought to their task a thorough acquaintance with the thought and learning of their respective ages, and that in the construction of their sermons they had profited much from their familiarity with other forms of literary expression. Thus, even in this earlier period, we meet with a conscious effort to instruct and edify by means of well constructed discourses on religious and moral subjects, in which biblical and rabbinical thought is enforced with illustrations from philosophy, science, and personal observation. But these are written discourses, compact treatises on religious themes homiletically expounded. The breath of the spoken word is not in them. Their authors think and write as makers of books, addressing themselves to readers, not as speakers, addressing themselves to audiences. Hence, their style is largely of the impersonal kind. It possesses clarity, but lacks directness. The diction is correct, but mostly unimaginative. The form is sometimes simple, more often complex, but seldom beautiful. Nor is the subject matter of such a nature as cannot be found more elaborately and more convincingly treated in the works on ethics and philosophy, which these preachers used so freely and from which they quoted so copiously. The appeal of their

sermons is thus largely to the mind, the reason, occasionally to the emotions, rarely to the executive faculty, the will.

Moscato metamorphosed the form and vitalized the content of the Jewish sermon. With him the sermon assumes the form of a religious message *addressed to a congregation.* At the heart of every one of his sermons, there is a weighty theme the spiritual implications of which are of profound significance to the life and conduct of the people. To develop this central theme in the clearest and most effective manner, he draws upon all his intellectual resources: Bible, Midrash, biblical Commentary, Kabbalah, art, science, philosophy, history, literature. All his vast information, Jewish and general, he uses as a reservoir wherewith to irrigate the soil of his message. For, however deeply engrossing the means, the end is never lost sight of, which is, to build up a stronger Jewish consciousness, a more unyielding loyalty to the teachings and ideals of the past, and a closer attachment to the things of the spirit. And this message is cast in a mould so graceful and artistic that, despite the antiquated character of much of the material he uses, one is tempted to characterize Moscato as the father of the modern Jewish sermon.

2

Moscato was born in the town of Osimo, near Ancona on the Adriatic, during the first half of the sixteenth century. The exact date of his birth cannot be ascertained. If his plea for financial assistance for those who suffered exile[2] be taken to refer to the Jewish expulsions from Tunis, in 1535,[2a] then the date of his birth must fall not later than in the first decade of the sixteenth century. At any rate, he remained in his native city up to 1554, when Paul IV ordered the expulsion of all

[2] Sermon 23.

[2a] See Abba Apfelbaum, *Toldot Moscato*, p. 8.

Jews from the Ancona district, which had been annexed to the papal states by Clement VII, in 1532. Forced to leave his native city, Moscato found refuge in Mantua, in the home of his kinsman Samuel Minzi Beretaro. Here he found shelter and stimulus for intellectual activity.[2b] For here, in Mantua, lived and worked Azariah dei Rossi and the Provençal brothers who played an important role in his intellectual growth.[2c] Here he soon became known as a man of wide and varied learning and as a preacher of extraordinary power. In 1587, he was made Chief Rabbi of Mantua, and a year later his נפוצות יהודה appeared, upon which his fame rests and, we think, rests securely. He died a little before 1594, as his commentary to the Cuzari, entitled קול יהודה, was published in that year, posthumously.

The נפוצות יהודה[3] comprises the entire homiletical output of Moscato, extant.[4] It consists of fifty-two occasional sermons on a variety of subjects, held together by the golden thread of ancient Jewish lore, and permeated by one common purpose, namely, to instruct and edify the scattered communities of Judah.[5] These sermons represent the actual utterance of the preacher, presumably in his native tongue, Italian, though some of them might well have been preached in their present Hebrew form. Many of these sermons were preached in the synagogue before general assemblies;[6] some were preached before small gatherings on special occasions;[7] while others may have been preached before a small circle of friends in the House of Study.[8] They were preached on all sorts of occa-

[2b] הקדמה, נפ"י.

[2c] Ser. 33, p. 85a. [3] Warsaw, 1871.

[4] He refers occasionally—Sermon 51, p. 133—to a commentary of his on Canticles, but that commentary seems never to have been published.

[5] הקדמה.

[6] See note to Ser. 32, p. 82a; Ser. 23, p. 58b; Ser. 36, p. 96a.

[7] Ser. 28, p. 71a; Ser. 29, p. 71a. [8] Sermons 1 and 5, for example.

sions, principally on the chief Holy Days, at Abrahamitic rites, at weddings and funerals, at the dedication of a Yeshiba, on special Sabbaths, and on ordinary Sabbaths when local emergencies called for the pleading voice of the preacher.[9]

Every one of these sermons bears a well-chosen title, such as "Trust and Thanksgiving," "Fathers and Sons," "Sacred and Secular," "The Microcosm," "The Divine Circle," "Israel the Unique People," "Love and Fear," "Exaltation through Faith," "The Glory of Man." Underneath the heading of the sermon is placed the proposition, כלל הדרוש, a brief summary of the central thought and main divisions of the sermon. This is followed, generally, by the biblical text, נושא,[10] after which comes the rabbinical text, מאמר.[11] Frequently, the biblical text is dispensed with.[12] Sometimes, the sermon is lacking in a specific rabbinical text, the whole message revolving around the biblical text.[13] Occasionally, when the sermon is expository in character, both texts are omitted.[14]

The sermon proper, דרוש, which ensues, generally opens with an exordium. For Moscato accepts and, in most instances, faithfully follows, Cicero's outline of a properly constructed oratorical composition, consisting of four parts: the exordium, the proposition, the analysis, the conclusion.[15] The forms the exordium assumes are as varied as they are effective. At times, it dwells briefly on the importance of the theme selected, as in the fifth sermon, "The Scroll of Order,"

[9] Sermons 40, 41, 42 were preached on Rosh Hashanah; 38 and 39, on the Sabbath of Repentance; 20, on Yom Kippur; 15, 17, 30, 36, 52, on Succoth; 37, on Hanukkah; 23, on the Great Sabbath; 4, 21, 51, on Passover; 12 and 13, on Shabuoth; 43, on the Sabbath of Comfort; 28, 29, at births; 26, at a wedding; 32, 33, 34, 35, at funerals; 16, at the dedication of the Mantua Yeshiba.

[10] Ser. 9, p. 22b. . . . מה לי עוד לבקש אמרים לצורך הקדסה הואיל והנושא עצמו.

[11] Ser. 9, p. 27a. . . . והכל נשמע במאמר אשר יצאה ראשונה.

[12] Ser. 5, 13, 27, etc. [13] Ser. 45, 50.

[14] Ser. 19. [15] Ser. 5, p. 18a.

wherein the discussion of the subject is introduced with the thought that nature impresses us most profoundly with its superb orderliness, that a perfect God seems to have imparted a portion of His harmonious nature to the works of His hands; or, as in the fifty-first sermon, "A Remembrance of the Departure from Egypt," wherein it develops the thought that what most distinguishes man from the rest of the animal kingdom is his gift of speech, and that therefore his feeling of gratitude, which he shares in common with brute creation, finds clearest utterance in human speech, in words of praise and thanksgiving. Sometimes, the exordium touches upon the occasion which has called forth the sermon, as in the sixteenth sermon, preached at the dedication of the Mantua Yeshiba, wherein it pays generous tribute to the leaders of the community by whose vision and effort the institution came into being; or, as in the twenty-fourth sermon, "Pay Thy Vows unto God," wherein it animadverts, with considerable displeasure, upon the sad practice prevalent among certain classes, of publicly vowing to pay stipulated amounts into the congregational treasury, in recognition of honors bestowed upon them at the synagogue, and then refusing to make good their promises. Not infrequently, the exordium embodies some casual, personal remarks, which have no direct bearing on the sermon itself, and are addressed to the hearers as such, either in the nature of a humble apology for presuming to speak on such an occasion or on such a weighty question, as in the thirty-second and thirty-sixth sermons, or in the nature of a personal declaration of intention, as in the thirty-ninth sermon, wherein the audience is roughly divided into three groups and the promise is held out to each of mental and spiritual sustenance proper to its condition. At times, as in the twenty-first sermon, the exordium refers to a sermon of similar content recently given by the preacher on

another occasion, and which the congregation presumably remembers. Occasionally, the exordium consists of the statement that the extreme transparency of the text makes all preliminary comments superfluous, as in the ninth sermon.

As a rule, the exordium is marked by directness of approach, sincerity of feeling, and beauty of expression. To illustrate Moscato's method of approach as well as to reveal some of the qualities of his literary style, it may be well to give here, in translation, a characteristic exordium to one of his sermons:

"The sun, which illumined with its brilliant rays my own dark and weak mind, imparting to it such glow and vigor as inspired me with the confidence to cope with questions too deep for me,—that sun has set. I refer to the great light of our master and teacher, Rabbi Moses Provençal, who was a veritable well of living water unto me, and in whose light I did see light. But, alas! thick darkness now envelops me. I face the perplexing problems of life, divested of all power and guidance. The simplest questions tower before me as insurmountable difficulties. Truly, 'my heart fluttereth, my strength faileth me; as for the light of my eyes, it also is gone from me.' O, would that I could pay adequate tribute to this man of God, to impress you with the loss we have sustained! It is a task which only my recent illness prevented me from attempting hitherto, and which even now I cannot hope to fulfil creditably, for it baffles my limited strength. Yet, a great duty rests upon me. I cannot evade it. Thus, two conflicting emotions are struggling within me: a feeling of utter powerlessness, and a sense of imperious obligation. I am like a man seized with the palsy, which ailment, medical authorities assure us, is caused by two opposite motions, an upward and a downward motion, the debilitated condition of the organ making it tend downwards while its innate energy pulses up-

wards, thus creating by these contrary currents a state of constant vibration and tremor. I, too, am all aquiver. My sense of duty impels me to the task confronting me, while my sense of unfitness restrains me, yea, pulls me back. It is only the consciousness that in matters of insuperable difficulty the will is often taken for the deed, that induces me to grapple with the task duty has laid upon me. And so, I unfurl to the wind the sails of my frail, weather-beaten boat, and send it forth to brave the stormy sea, not recking whether it survive or perish."[16]

The body of the sermon, with its analyses or divisions, while aiming to unfold the main theme as foreshadowed in the title and lay bare its spiritual implications, is structurally dependent on the rabbinical text, the full development of which links it, generally, with the thought of the biblical text. The biblical text thus becomes, in most instances, a terminal point and not, like the rabbinical text, a vehicle hastening toward a final destination. This constitutes, in the main, a notable departure from the earlier method of Jewish preaching, which was largely scriptural in character, a departure, however, not initiated by Moscato, though it acquired greater plausibility and hence gave surer promise of permanence, when Moscato's art invested the new method with the beauty of perfection. Ever since the close of the gaonic period, when the compiler's work was done and the Midrash was canonized, so to speak, Jewish preachers, lured by the infinite possibilities of this inexhaustible source, turned their attention more and more to the homiletical interpretation of this newer material, often to the neglect, if not total exclusion, of the primary source, the Bible. This virtual subordination of the Bible, as a source of material for the preacher, to the rabbinic homilies, of unequal spiritual stimulus and literary worth,

[16] Ser. 33, p. 85a.

paved the way for that regrettable deterioration in Jewish preaching which, in later centuries, and among the less gifted preachers, culminated in such tragic futility and hopeless impotence.

Yet, in Moscato, only faint traces, prophetic of the sermon's future decline, are here and there visible. That habitual play on words, so indigenous to the technique of the ancient homilists, becomes strangely incongruous when fused with subtlety of thought and dexterity of language.[17] But such

[17] The thought, for example, that love has the power to unite two souls into one is confirmed by the fact that אהבה, love, and אחד, one, are of the same numerical value. (Ser. 32, p. 81b.) The fear of God and the love of God are inextricably interwoven as is evidenced from the fact that אהבה, love, and יראה, fear, have two letters in common, and that the first two of the one joined to the first two of the other and the last two of the one joined to the last two of the other, will reproduce the identical words, respectively, unchanged. (Ser. 30, p. 75b.) The word רפאים refers to the dead, because its root, רפא, when read from left to right, points to the element into which they resolve. (Ser. 31, p. 76a.) The word פלא signifies a reversal in the natural process, because, when read from left to right, it finds itself back at the point from which it originally started on its alphabetical career. (Ser. 33, p. 86a.) The celebration of the Feast of Dedication lasts eight days, because it commemorates the miracle wrought in the oil, שמן, a word strongly alliterative with שמנה; hence, the word חשמנאי incorporates the luminous substance, as well as, in the first letter, the duration, of that feast. (Ser. 37, p. 100b.) The reason why the expression כי טוב, associated with the other things of creation, is not used with reference to man, may be rationally accounted for. In the first place, man at his best represents a higher kind of "good" than that ascribed to other creatures, and, in the second place, man at his worst is unworthy of such a characterization. Hence the significance of the verse: מה רב טובך אשר צפנת ליראיך פעלת לחוסים בך נגד בני אדם—How great, to those who fear Thee, is the טוב which Thou hast omitted! Thou hast done this, first, for the glory of those who trust in Thee (seeing that they represent a higher type of good than could be conveyed by the term טוב), and secondly, for the humiliation of those so earthly as not to merit the epithet. (Ser. 31, p. 77b.) The mystical thought that circumcision of the body symbolizes the circumcision of the heart, and that the true function of the rite is to bring us closer to God, finds support in the verse: מי לה' אלי ויאספו אליו כל בני לוי, distorting the reading, of course, to מילה אלי. (Ser. 28, p. 70b.) And this,

vagaries and others exhibit Moscato only as child of his day, when verbal ingenuity was as much admired in the preacher as in the man of letters, when general literature swarmed with "quips and cranks and wanton wiles," and when in Jewish preachers especially, heirs to the worst as well as the best style of the ancient homilists, such artifices acquired naturalness and authoritative sanction. Besides, in Moscato, these artificial devices adorn, or mar, only the fringes of his sermon; they are not woven into its texture. Through the main fabric of the sermon run strands spun out of the best thought of a renascent culture. No other Jewish preacher we could mention reveals in his sermons such a vast acquaintance with the thought and learning of past ages. His sermons fairly bristle with references and quotations from Plato and Aristotle, Philo and Josephus, Galenus and Publius Ovidius, Quintilianus and Cicero, Asklepiades, Seneca, Averroes, Rudolph Agricola, Pico de Mirandola, etc., not to speak of Saadia, Maimonides, Halevi, Baḥya, Ibn Ezra, Levi ben Gershon, Crescas, and others. He speaks with as much familiarity of music as of Hebrew grammar;[25] of anatomy and physiology as of biblical history;[26] of Greek poetry and mythology as of the religious profundities of the Psalms.[27] In fact, criticism of his frequent use of foreign sources and secular material must have been widely current, for on more than one occasion he feels constraint to justify his method: "Let it not vex you because I draw so much upon extraneous sources. For to me, these foreign streams flow from our own Jewish wells. The nations of the earth derived their wisdom from our

---

despite his own just criticism of Albo, who, in his עקרים, interprets a verse in a way that does violence to its syntax! (Ser. 30, p. 74b.)

Notes 18–24, having been incorporated into the above paragraph, fail to appear in the numerical order first assigned to them.

[25] Ser. 1, p. 1a. [26] Ser. 8, p. 24b. [27] Ser. 13, p. 37a.

own sages. If I often make use of information gathered from secular books, it is only because I know the true origin of that information. Besides, I know what to reject as well as what to accept."[28]

The framework of the sermon, though considerably modified by him, came to him, in the main, as an inheritance from the past, but its substance he enriched with the treasures of his own mind and heart. He poured into the archaic mould the pure metal of an industrious, inventive intelligence. That definite principles, of a high order, guided Moscato in the preparation of his sermon, principles which he applied with the scrupulousness and conscientiousness of the true artist, not only to the product as a whole but to each of its component parts as well, becomes evident from his repeated affirmation regarding the function of the sermon and the duty of the preacher. A sermon, says Moscato, must possess two indispensable elements: sound substance and artistic form. It must satisfy our craving for beauty as well as our thirst for knowledge.[29] Hence, he disclaims the art of sermon-making when called upon merely to exhort the people to contribute generously to a worthy, philanthropic cause.[30] When constrained by the exigencies of the time to appeal for financial aid from the pulpit, he does so parenthetically, as it were, interrupting himself in the discussion of his general theme, in order to perform this unhomiletical function.[31] Not that he minimizes the importance of such appeals, or that, in his preaching, he contents himself with the vain gratification of a barren acquiescence. On the contrary, in all his preaching he is upheld by the confident expectation that his words will bear very practical results. "I know," he says at the close of one of his characteristic appeals, "that you will respond to

[28] Ser. 5, p. 18a. [29] Ser. 23, p. 58b.
[30] *Ibid.* [31] Ser. 4, p. 12a.

this plea of mine on behalf of the poor and the needy, that you will be unto them as the rain that refreshes and the dew that quickens. Therefore, as a token of my appreciation of your generosity, I will proceed to interpret a verse from the Psalms, which confirms the truth I have been expounding."[32] To interpret a verse from the Psalms, that confirms a vital truth, he might have added, will not only compensate adequately a generous response, but, in the long run, will prove the surest and most effective means of awakening such a response. For Moscato views the sermon as a mere instrumentality that shall operate on the will, giving it firmness, power and direction. But the will is not a fortress to be taken by storm; it is a human faculty to be trained and moulded into a fit organ of obedience. To win over the will to a prescribed plan of life and duty, the sermon must possess sound thought clothed in a garment of beauty, and the preacher of that sermon must be imbued with a spirit of perfect sincerity. "The preacher shall employ beauty of expression, cogent reasoning, logical construction, but, above all, exemplify in his conduct the truths he seeks to inculcate. A preacher who is deficient in any of these qualities should refrain, or be restrained, from speaking in public."[33] The extravagant use of words and the unnecessary multiplication of facts he regards, therefore, as a presumption as well as a positive hindrance to effective preaching. "I shall not enumerate all the difficulties involved in this statement, lest I swerve from my purpose and lose myself in vain effusions, which are always sinful because never helpful."[34] To be helpful, enlightening, stimulating, strengthening, this he believes to be the highest function of the true preacher. It may be necessary and even profitable to exhort, to rebuke, in order to infuse holiness into the people, but it is a finer form of the preacher's art to endeavor to make

[32] Ser. 36, p. 98a. [33] Ser. 12, p. 34a. [34] Ser. 48, p. 126a.

the holy impulses within the people more permanent, to confirm them in the good life they are already living, to give them the will, the steadfastness, to continue.[35]

With such a conception of the true aim of the sermon and the chief elements that must enter into its composition, it was inevitable that Moscato should pay heed to the peculiar needs, the particular capacity, of the people whom the sermon was meant to benefit. Deeply philosophical though his sermons invariably are, he spares no effort to make himself clearly understood, avoiding all such minute analyses as would tend to confuse the intelligent follower of the discussion. "At this time, I shall not attempt to probe the depth of this subject, contenting myself with the discussion of its more immediate, its external, aspects, for the needs of the many claim now my attention."[36] Of course, to the unintelligent, the untrained mind, he can offer little encouragement. He will not descend to a lower intellectual level in order to capture the interest of the unthinking crowd. "And those who are unaccustomed to philosophic reasoning will do well to accept on faith what may be clearly demonstrated by reason."[37] But even to the intelligent reader or listener, unless ideas are made concrete, transparently clear, abstract truth will prove more bewildering than enlightening. Moscato, therefore, never fails to illustrate his thought with examples drawn from observation or culled from literary works.

To disclose the inner truth and beauty of the thought, for example, that to aim high is to be close to the goal, and that the more immediate the reward the further is one removed from the source of that reward, he cites, as analogy, the builders of a boat and the respective relations they bear to it. Those who actually construct it find their task close at hand and receive their reward immediately. But when their

[35] Ser. 20, p. 53a. [36] Ser. 4, p. 10b. [37] Ser. 4, p. 15a.

duty is done, the boat sails on and knows them not. The same holds true of those who decorate it and furnish its equipment. Not even the captain, who guides and steers its course on the high seas, looks to a more distant goal, and, hence, his relation to it, too, is remote and fleeting. It is only the owner of the boat who has visions of its future profits.[38] Or, when speaking of the enormous personal responsibility of the man who, after having reached a high spiritual level, suddenly plunges into the abysmal depths of sin, he draws a picture of a skilled mechanic who receives choice material with which to fashion some musical instrument. After months of hard application he moulds the material into a perfect product of superb quality and priceless worth. But then, suddenly, in a fit of anger, he flings it to the ground and shatters it into fragments. What has this artisan destroyed? Only bits of material of limited value, indemnification of which would cancel the liability? Has he not rather demolished a perfect, priceless, irreplaceable instrument, the liability for which can scarcely be reduced?[39] Yes, the finer his spirit the more vigilant must one be in preserving its superior quality; for "the finer the cloth, the greater the danger of its being consumed by moth."[40] Hence, when man fails to maintain the place of eminence he has attained, he is like the beasts which perish.[41] Again, the music of the spheres, which, with the ancients, Moscato believed to be real, is inaudible to us, because "he who lives near a waterfall is scarcely disturbed by the roar of the down-rushing waters."[42] There are mysteries in God's truth which only frequent contemplation can render comprehensible to us, for "only those accustomed to the sun can endure the fierceness of its glare."[43]

[38] Ser. 4, p. 10b. [39] Ser. 27, p. 65a. [40] *Ibid.* p. 65b.
[41] *Ibid.*—ואדם ביקר בל ילין נמשל כבהמות נדמו.—Ps. 49, 13.
[42] Ser. 1, p. 1b. [43] Ser. 33, p. 87b.

More often the illustrations are borrowed from natural history, legendary lore, mythology, poetry. Gratitude is a virtue deeply imbedded in the nature of all living creatures, for "naturalists tell us that the entrapped elephant will kneel down, in humble appreciation, to the one who releases it from its captivity. They further relate how a tiger, running over a marshy field, once sank into a swamp, in which it would have perished, were it not for the timely help of a man who, attracted by its cry of distress, rushed to its rescue and saved it from a cruel fate; and how the tiger, though ferocious by nature, thenceforth gratefully clung to its deliverer, as if bound to him by ties of purest affection. In one of the history books, I find the story of a soldier who chanced to come upon a young lion, writhing in agony, as a vicious serpent, coiled around its neck, threatened to extinguish its life. Aroused by pity for the lion, the soldier forthwith killed the serpent and thus saved the lion's life. Out of sheer gratitude, the lion refused to leave the soldier but persisted in following him and doing all manner of service for him. The story continues, that when the soldier was about to leave the camp and return, by way of the sea, to his native home, the lion still spurned to part with him. It followed him into the boat and stayed with him through the voyage, until, one day, perceiving that the provisions for its maintenance were falling low, it chose to jump overboard rather than see itself become a burden to its master."[44] To illustrate the thought that philosophy, in itself and for itself, is a weariness to the flesh, having no end and no purpose, he says, after citing the punishment meted out to the Athenians by Rabbi Joshua,[45] that the ceaseless and useless activities of the philosophers remind him of the poet's fancy which makes Sisyphus, as part of his prescribed duties in Hades, roll a stone to the top of a hill

[44] Ser. 21, p. 55b. [45] Bek. 8b.

only to see it come down again that he might repeat the process endlessly; or which makes Danaus, in punishment for the advice he gave his daughters that they kill the sons of Aegyptus when they come to live with them, pour water into a sieve until it gets filled.[46] The eagle symbolizes for him military power, for "in Greek legend we find it told that, when Alexander the Great was born, an eagle was seen flying over the roof of his father's palace, touching in its flight all the points of the compass; thus foreshadowing Alexander's future conquest of the world."[47]

But, with Moscato, an illustration is only that which makes truth lustrous; the basis for any given truth he seeks elsewhere, in the realm of fact, or what is recognized as such, and sound reasoning. Once a truth, or a strong presumption in its favor, is firmly established, he employs rhetorical devices to make it impressive. But he frowns upon a method of interpretation which seeks no more valid support for its conclusions than that which mere analogy may afford.[48] There is but one main arsenal from which the Jewish preacher may draw his weapons of offense and defense, though other bases of supply need not, yea, must not be despised or overlooked, and that is the chief repository of Jewish thought, the Bible and the rabbinic Agada.[49] Of course, these primary sources await the art of the skilled interpreter. For, he assures us, even as the inner quality of a natural product, of fruit, for example, manifests itself in beauty of appearance and fragrance of scent, so the Torah, of so excellent an inner content, cannot but

[46] Ser. 13, p. 37a. [47] Ser. 26, p. 64b.

[48] Ser. 40, p. 109a—אך אמנם אין זה כי אם דבור המשלי בלתי מספיק לסמיכות דעת המשכיל.

[49] Moscato very seldom introduces Halaḥa in the development of his ideas. When, on some rare occasion, he cites a legal decision, he does so more for the purpose of illustrating his thought than to give authoritative support to it.—Ser. 27, p. 65a.

clothe itself in an external garb of great beauty and splendor. Hence, the literal meaning of a statement, a phrase, a word, when viewed closely, will be seen to contain clear indications of a richer, more potent truth. To neglect the literal is to surrender the key to the secret treasures of the Torah. To wallow in the literal is to abandon the hope of ever penetrating the glorious panorama it seems to veil from our eyes.[50] That the peculiar construction an individual interpreter puts upon a biblical passage may not have been contemplated by the author of that passage, argues little against the attempt of the preacher to associate a thought with it which is not contrary to its meaning nor foreign to its spirit. "I do not mean to assert that the Psalmist had Jacob in mind when he composed these particular Psalms. Yet, in them, he does reflect the life, the struggles and sufferings, of Israel, whose prototype Jacob was."[51] Besides, the literal meaning when strictly adhered to often raises difficulties not easily surmounted. How, one may ask, could the Rabbis know, for instance, if we take their statement as an exact historic report, that in the hour of Revelation, not a bird twittered, not a fowl was on the wing, not an ox uttered a bellowing sound? Surely, the Bible would have recorded such an extraordinary phenomenon. Nor can it be said that the cause of faith is much strengthened by the recital of this additional miracle, since it is seen to evoke undisguised doubt as to its authenticity. Obviously, we are concerned here not with a historic fact but with a poetic truth, to be allegorically interpreted. "Let me say this, however, that those who accept this passage in all its literalness may count me among their followers. I am second to none in strength and plenitude of faith. I believe in God's power to do these things, and more. Yet the interpretation I am about to offer will silence all such questions and remove

[50] Ser. 7, p. 21a. [51] Ser. 2, p. 6a.

much confusion."[52] And, surely, by the interpreter's method, "we may succeed all the better in kindling within the hearts of our people a true love for the Torah, which embraces, and excels, all other wisdom."[53] Moreover, the power exercised by tradition has long sounded the death-knell to the dogma of literalism. Even as staunch a protagonist of its method as Ibn Ezra, who everywhere strives to ascertain the literal meaning, has to admit in the most emphatic manner that, in legal questions at least, without the aid of traditional interpretation, the search for the literal is a hopeless one.[54]

The preacher, then, who would mould Jewish character, must resort to the interpreter's art, when dealing with biblical statement, rabbinical utterance, traditional institution, and the like. Many of the Agadists, we know, were allegorists, and the preacher who would explore the true meaning of their obscure, enigmatic sayings, must employ the allegorical method. Why they chose to couch their thoughts in such figurative, symbolical language, presents little mystery to us. Some of the Rabbis adopted this mode of expression, because in it they found sufficient mental relaxation from the strenuous, elaborate, prosaic discussions of the Halaḥa. Others were swayed by pedagogic motives, aiming, in this way, by challenging the mental powers of the students, to sharpen their wits, deepen their impressions, and strengthen their memory, as well as fill them with the joy and exhilaration incident to the successful solution of a literary puzzle, the unravelling of a complicated, but not altogether baffling, allegory.[55] That such a method, offering unbounded latitude to the individual interpreter, may result in too exuberant a growth of diverse, often contradictory interpretations, not always acceptable to

[52] Ser. 12, p. 34b. [53] *Ibid.*
[54] Ser. 9, p. 26a. [55] Ser. 13, p. 38a.

clear reason and sound judgment, becomes increasingly evident. But, then, despite our personal opinions and reactions, a broad and benevolent tolerance is dictated by the very limitations of a method so essentially subjective in character. "Many other interpretations have been given, which appear to me extremely unsatisfactory, though I do not undertake to say that the biblical verse, lending itself to a variety of constructions, may not actually embody and express the various meanings cited, yet rejected, by me."[56]

Moscato, therefore, cognizant of the fact that it is by means of interpretation alone that he could hope to give utterance to the ideas, thoughts and feelings of his teeming mind, approaches his text with the confidence that a beautiful pattern is drawn in its lines, which must be closely scanned to yield the richness of its author's full intent.[57] At times, the minute examination of the text results in nothing more startling than the discovery that a simple religious truth, profound only in its spiritual implications, engages the author's attention. But even the simplest homily Moscato invests with a freshness of form that bespeaks his originality. In analyzing as transparent a text as that from the fifteenth Psalm: "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart," he reveals the clarity and aptness of his homiletical method. Man, he posits, in his life on earth, stands in a threefold relation: to his God, to his fellowman, and to himself. When the Psalmist seeks an answer to the question: "Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain?" he is chiefly concerned with defining the nature and scope of man's true relations in life. "He that walketh uprightly," defines his relations to the divine; "and

[56] Ser. 4, p. 10b.

[57] זהו חמר הדרוש ראוי שנשתדל להמציא בו צורה נאותה כמפת נדבת יד הנותן.—Ser. 40, p. 108b.

worketh righteousness," his relations to fellowmen; "and speaketh truth in his heart," his relations to himself, signifying that his inner life is not a lie.[58] In most instances, however, Moscato uses the obscure text, whether derived from biblical or rabbinical sources, which only by a process of accommodation can be made to suggest the thought of the preacher. "Thy silver has become dross,"[59] expresses for Moscato the whole pathos of our spiritual experience. Man's soul, in its natural and impure state, represents a quantity of silver mixed with dross. Our chief task in life, we vaguely apprehend, is to purge the silver of our soul of its inferior, grosser elements, its dross. But how tragic, when we not only fail to rid the soul of its impurities but defile the very center of its being, causing the silver itself to turn into dross![60] The agadic narrative which tells of Rabbi Judah that once as he read from the book of Lamentations and reached the verse: "He hath cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel,"[61] the book suddenly dropped from his hands,[62] is made to yield the thought that Israel's glory sinks to the earth only when he lets his Book fall to the ground.[63] The story of the Athenian who found a broken mortar in the streets of Jerusalem, and who, when taking it to a tailor for repairs, was informed that, if he could only make a thread out of a handful of sand, his vessel would be sewed together,[64] suggests to Moscato the way Israel's salvation must be secured. The broken mortar symbolizes the Jewish people, broken by oppression and persecution, as does the sand with which Abraham's descendants are compared. Hence the wisdom of the Jewish tailor: Make me a thread of these grains of sand, unite the scattered remnants of Israel, and I shall repair the broken mortar,

[58] Ser. 11, p. 32a. [59] Isa. 1, 22.
[60] Ser. 27, p. 65b. [61] Lam. 2, 1.
[62] Ḥag. 5b. [63] Ser. 33, p. 86. [64] Lam. r. 1, 8.

heal the wounds of suffering Israel. Through unity and solidarity alone can Israel hope to achieve his final redemption.[65]

It lies in the very nature of the allegorical method that persons, events, institutions, should be made to express something more than is seen on the surface, should become visible symbols of abstract philosophic ideas, qualities of character, or religious sentiments. Thus, Cain represents material sustenance and bodily comfort, while Abel personifies man's natural desires and passions.[66] Abraham embodies pure spirit, while Isaac represents matter. When Isaac submits to the will of Abraham, that is, when matter is willing to be controlled by spirit, then, as in the case of Isaac, it is elevated to the high level occupied by spirit.[67] Naomi symbolizes divine inspiration, so delectable to the soul; Ruth stands for reason, ever nurturing the craving mind; Orpah represents matter, ever rebellious against reason. Hence, when it is written: "And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and Ruth clave to her,"[68] the truth is emphasized that when matter humbles itself and pays homage to divine inspiration, then reason, too, will reject all lower forms of thought and cleave only to that which emanates from God and His law. The reading of the Book of Ruth on the day commemorating the Revelation of God's truth is, therefore, most appropriate.[69] The three major festivals were instituted in correspondence with the three dis-

[65] Ser. 42, p. 127. It is interesting to note how, at times, Moscato applies this allegorical method when interpreting general literature. When Socrates, according to Plato's report, requested that in the hour of his burial, a cock be offered up as a sacrifice to the gods, he meant to indicate, says Moscato, that even as the cock shows, by his timely crowing, that he knows how to distinguish between night and day, so does the intelligent mind glory in his power to distinguish between the darkness of this world and the light of the world to come—Ser. 35, p. 95b.

[66] Ser. 10, p. 29b. [67] Ser. 34, p. 92a.

[68] Ruth, 1,14. [69] Ser. 9, p. 27a.

tinct powers of the soul, רוח, נפש, נשמה, by the first of which is designated the will, ambition; by the second the desire, passion; and by the third the understanding, the seat of wisdom. Passover seeks to curb the נפש, the leaven, the evil desire, of the soul; Shabuoth aims to feed the נשמה, to perfect by means of the Torah the reasoning faculty of the soul and increase its wisdom; Succoth is designed to control the רוח, the ambition, pointing to the truth that all temporal successes come from Him and that only by taking up our abode in the booth, that is, by placing ourselves under His protection, can we hope to endure.[70] מצה symbolizes creation out of nothing. It is original in its composition, whereas חמץ, leavened with yeast, is derivative. Therefore, מצה need be eaten only on the first day of Passover, as only on the first day of Creation could there be creation out of nothing, while the abstention from חמץ is imposed by ordinance for the duration of the feast.[71] The four specimens of the products of the earth forming a part of the Succoth ritual: the willow, the myrtle, the palm-branch, the citron, correspond, respectively, to the four elements or powers operating in man: growth, sensation, motion, reason.[72] They may also symbolize peace in its main aspects and relations. The citron, resembling in shape the human heart, stands for peace between man and God, who is called the heart of Israel; the palm-branch, similar in form to the spinal-column, stands for peace within one's self; the myrtle, with its three whorls, typifies peace within one's household, in relation to one's wife, one's children and servants; the willow, because of the luxuriance of its growth, represents social peace, harmonious relations with one's fellow-citizens.[73] The Feast of Succoth falls in the autumn of the year, because it is the season of stormy winds and heavy rains, when dwelling

[70] Ser. 10, p. 31a. [71] Ser. 4, p. 10b.

[72] Ser. 17. [73] Ser. 52.

in booths is attended by much personal discomfort, thus inuring us to the practice of reposing our trust in God when untoward conditions surround us. It is also the season of abundance, when our homes are stored with provisions for the winter. At such a time, therefore, when prosperity reigns supreme, the call comes to us to leave our comfortable homes and go forth into the frail booth, to free our minds of all material thoughts, that we may all the better center our hope and trust in God; for the day when we shall have to relinquish our hold on the things we have amassed, is not far off.[74] Hence the significance of the extemporaneous character of the booth's structure, exposed to all natural elements, accessible to the glow and brilliance of the starry firmament: When we contemplate God's handiwork, we learn that He alone can help and protect us, and that, therefore, in Him alone we should place our trust.[75]

It is by such methods that Moscato unfolds the principal thoughts of the central theme of his sermon, reaching the Conclusion with the sureness and dispatch of one whose goal is definitely fixed and whose purpose is never concealed. In the Conclusion, he generally contrives to fix in the minds of his hearers the chief points or divisions of the sermon by the use of an effective recapitulation, and to stir to action the will of the audience by a brief but forceful appeal. The recapitulation, which often consists, in addition to a brief summary, of the exposition of a whole Psalm in the light of the truth established in the body of the sermon, showing, by various ingenious adjustments and accommodations, how the particular Psalm comprehends the leading thoughts of the sermon in their logical sequence, reveals an artistry as effective as it is impressive; while the appeal, earnest, dignified, hopeful, exemplifies Moscato's own theory of the primary object of the

[74] Ser. 36, p. 97a. [75] *Ibid.* p. 97b.

sermon, which is, to instruct and edify, that Jewish character may be formed by intelligence and sanctified by action.[76]

3

A preacher like Moscato, who roamed through all fields of knowledge in search of material for his sermons, could not be expected to tarry in one place long enough to explore it thoroughly and make disclosures of an original, permanent nature. His originality lay largely in the field of homiletics. The sermon itself, paradoxically enough, was his chief contribution and main beneficiary. Into it he poured the wealth of his acquired knowledge and of his innate spiritual refinement. Upon it he lavished the exuberant powers of a well-disciplined talent and the luminous insight of a mature experience. Through it his name and fame are forever emblazoned on the pages of our literary history. It is not possible, therefore, to credit Moscato with the formulation of a new system of thought, or with the advancement of a new interpretation of Judaism. In fact, his profound reverence for the past and all that it wrought, precluded the possibility of any departure from the established norms of Jewish thought and belief. Yet, while in the main he gave no fresh impetus to the furtherance of new ideas, he imparted to the thought of his day a new emphasis and clarity, which distinguished him from most of the preachers of his generation and cannot but elicit the interest of those of our own.

Moscato may be described as a philosophic preacher not only because his sermons abound in discussions of problems which have ever engrossed the attention of the various schools in philosophy, but also, and perhaps chiefly, because through his sermons there runs the distinct thread of a definite, positive, comprehensive view of the world and of man's place and

[76] See Ser. 9, p. 27b; Ser. 18, p. 50b; Ser. 20, p. 54; Ser. 40, p. 111.

duty in it. The external world, in its manifold phases and relations, comes under his scrutinizing gaze, is judiciously evaluated, and given a meaning in consonance with its high origin and sacred uses. For, to Moscato, God's wisdom and power are reflected in nature and in the life of man, and when we study nature and man we are in quest of God. In fact, only such knowledge of God as comes to us from our own researches can kindle in us the pure love of God. For true piety is but the result of our recognition of God's wisdom and power in the world.[77] The preacher's admonition that "God is in heaven and you on earth, therefore shall your words be few,"[78] cannot be construed as a denial to man of the privilege of coming to God by means of the intellect. To the contrary, every man is obliged to search for the evidences of God to the fullest extent of his mental powers, and take all the rest on faith.[79] And "who, with eyes raised heavenward, toward sun, moon, and stars, impressed with the order and regularity of their movements and with the beneficent effects produced on all things, can fail to affirm that a wise God is directing their course?"[80] It is within man's power to plumb the depths of the Infinite. The tendency of some to belittle man because of the material garb in which his spirit is clothed, is much to be deplored. True, man is composed of earth as well as of spirit, but his being suffers transformation even in the material portion of it because of the constant presence within it of pure spirit. For man's soul is not spirit tacked on to matter; it is spirit pervading matter, elevating, purifying and ennobling it in the process.[81]

But while man possesses great gifts which he must learn to respect and to which he must resort in unravelling the mystery of life so as to discover its chief reality, God, it behooves

[77] Ser. 6, p. 19a. [78] Eccl. 5,1. [79] Ser. 4, p. 12a.
[80] Ser. 1, p. 1b. [81] Ser. 34, p. 91.

him to remember that, in his essence, he is more than mind, that he is a living soul, and that the soul cannot live on what the intellect feeds. Factual knowledge is powerless to reach the soul. Natural science is subject to too many changes to satisfy our craving for stability. Metaphysics, not being built on positive knowledge, dealing chiefly with hypotheses, offers scant nourishment for the soul. For even when it posits the belief in a First Cause, that belief is vitiated by the doctrine of determinism to which it is so often wedded. The Torah alone contains those life-giving substances requisite for the growth and strength of the soul. It tells us, in a positive way, how the world and all its glorious phenomena came into being, and it sets forth, for our inspiration and guidance, the purest conceptions of life and the loftiest rules of human conduct, which alone can properly sustain the soul.[82] The world seems to be diligently engaged in discovering new avenues of escape from the perplexing problems of life. And so, there are those who seek refuge in the philosophy of materialism. Others court the delights of the imagination. Many more flee to reason for shelter. But all of them seem to forget that the walls behind which they seek protection are themselves tottering and ready to fall. "There are wings to the earth," but the senses are woefully inadequate for our most essential needs. "There are wings to the dawn," but the flights of the imagination take us neither high enough nor far enough to satisfy the aspiring soul. "There are wings to the sun," but reason, though enlightening, is not always infallible. Only those who labor in the Torah and find their delight in a life of good deeds, have discovered the true haven of rest and peace, for they have chosen to stand under the protecting wings of the Shekinah.[83]

Secular knowledge alone is incapable of leading us to the

[82] Ser. 13, p. 36b. [83] *Ibid.* p. 37a—Text, Ruth, r. 5, 4.

highest truth, God. It deals with the things that, despite their practical importance, are essentially trivial and evanescent.[84] The Torah alone and the life it prescribes can endow us with wings to fly unto God.[85] Algebra, geometry, astronomy, music, political science, metaphysics—theirs is the light of the moon, a borrowed light; the light of the Torah is the light of the sun, original and capable of an ever-increasing brightness.[86]

Of course, we must learn to distinguish between what is true and what is false in the teachings of philosophers. Spurious philosophers there are aplenty, who lead the people astray with their fallacious reasoning and unfounded theories. These are the men who propagate ideas and views that are frequently as filthy as they are false.[87] But there are also true philosophers, who approximate in their thinking the eternal truths of religion, between whom and the leaders of Jewish thought a covenant of peace has long been established, insuring harmony and friendly cooperation.[88] For, be it remembered, true philosophy is never the foe, but always the friend, of religion. When science and philosophy stand forth in all their soundness and purity, they are seen to be willing handmaids of religion, faithfully following the wise direction of theology, their recognized mistress.[89] In a word, what is true in philosophy is never in opposition to the Torah. Plato's philosophical truths, for example, tend only to confirm the tenets of Judaism and the teachings of our sages.[90] In fact, it would be difficult to discover a well-supported truth in philosophy that has not been anticipated in the writings of our ancient teachers.[91] It is the unsound reasoning of some

[84] Ser. 14, p. 39a. [85] Ser. 13, p. 36b.
[86] Ser. 14, p. 41b. [87] *Ibid.* 38b.
[88] *Ibid.* 39b. [89] *Ibid.* 39a. [90] Ser. 8, p. 21b.
[91] Ser. 5, p. 18—This claim of Moscato that true knowledge can be traced

philosophers that is responsible for the seeming conflicts and contradictions between philosophy and religion.[92]

But while the sober thought of the earnest seeker after truth, the true philosopher, presents no menace and no difficulty to the theological affirmations of religion, the weapons of philosophy may, at best, only support the position of religion, defending its conclusions, vindicating its doctrines; they cannot safeguard the sacred source whence all true religion ultimately flows. Reason is powerless to support and guide us when we are groping in the dark; we need a flash from above, a higher light, to illumine our path.[93] And only when our souls are purged of all impurities can we hope to receive the divine influences perpetually hovering over the human mind.[94] Reason, to be sure, can be of great service to us in helping us buttress the spiritual life, but not until it has been purified and ennobled by lofty ethical conduct. The service of God, which is man's chief function in life, gets its greatest stimulus from our knowledge of right and wrong, ethics, not from the wisdom born of ratiocination, philosophy.[95] Let us strive after thought and understanding, let us probe every prescribed act with our reason, but then let us do the deed. Perfection, spiritual happiness, cannot be produced by the one or the other but by both combined.[96] Even a school dedicated to Jewish learning will fail of its higher purpose when it seeks to instil only knowledge into its stu-

---

to one common source, the Torah, frequently leads him to make some very amusing assumptions. The *simile*, for example, is no doubt derived from משל (Ser. 31, p. 76b); the doctrine of the heavenly spheres, as well as the verbal designation, may owe its origin to the biblical verse: ברוחו שמים שפרה (*Ibid.* p. 79a); the term *music* may be traced to אל יחסר המזג, while the Greek word *kalliope* is so strikingly similar to the Hebrew expression קול יפה that the former may well have been derived from the latter (Ser. 1, p. 1b).

[92] Ser. 14, p. 39a. [93] Ser. 9, p. 26b. [94] *Ibid.*

[95] *Ibid.* [96] Ser. 18, p. 50b.

dents. Unless the study of truth leads to its enactment in practical life, and the knowledge of principles to their uncompromising observance in our daily relations, yea, unless piety is the goal of all instruction, the institution cannot endure.[97] Knowledge can add little to the soul's contentment, even were we to make personal happiness our chief goal, unless the impulse to impart it to others is strong upon us.[98] For, "we have not been brought into the world to serve our own selfish interests; we live largely for the good and happiness of our fellowmen."[99] It is in the service of others that we find justification for our existence and discover new vigor and zest for the tasks of life. Man is a fleeting shadow, a vanishing echo, until the quest of self-perfection, supplemented by the earnest pursuit after group-perfection, crowns his name with an unfaded memory.[100] Therefore, "let every God-fearing man endeavor to reach a high spiritual level, never allowing himself to be dislodged therefrom; and that eminence, once attained, will serve him as a high, fortified tower whither he might safely retreat and feel himself exalted."[101]

The ethical life, however, from the standpoint of pure religion, must be motivated by a desire to do the will of God, so that we may become at one with Him. It must flow from a sense of deep-seated reverence, of unbounded faith in God. "Fear God," must precede and result in the inevitability of "and keep His commandments"; the one must be the clear outcome of the other.[102] This is the whole of religion. The chief purpose of the study and observance of the Law is to prove thereby our willing submission to the divine will. "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and obey,"[103] that is, we will do in order that we may testify to our obedience.

[97] Ser. 16, p. 44a. [98] הקדמה. [99] Ser. 52, p. 135a.
[100] Ser. 32, p. 82a. [101] Ser. 27, p. 67a.
[102] Ser. 32, p. 83a. [103] Ex. 24,7.

Without this sense of obedience, the deed loses its spiritual meaning and value.[104] And only when by the aid of divine guidance, as afforded in the Torah, we have mastered the impulses to evil and cultivated genuine humility, are we capable of attaining that degree of truthfulness and faith which exalts and strengthens the spirit and fills it with the truth and peace of surpassing worth.[105] Then the lower as well as the higher energies of our nature, spiritualized by this their dedication to the service of God, lift us heavenward; the light that suffuses our being attracts, draws down, as it were, the light from above. Our hearts, in tune with the Infinite, vibrate with heavenly music.[106] To put it graphically, God, the absolute unity, may be likened to the indivisible point at the center of a circle, whose radii represent human souls in their striving after union with God. The radius reaches and touches the center because, itself composed of indivisible points linked together, it joins, in the last point of the series, the point at the center, like fusing with like. We, too, can unite with the absolute One through the unification and harmonization of the spiritual forces within us, such as the Torah alone is able to effect. When by the aid of the Torah we have attained perfect harmony in our inner life and in our relations with those about us, we become spiritual entities, in essence like God, capable, with God's active help, of merging into His being. The Psalmist gave notable expression to this thought when he said: קוה קויתי ה' ויט אלי וישמע שועתי, I drew a radius (קו) toward the point at the center, which is God, and He leaned toward me, coming forth, as it were, to meet me; He heard my cry, my soul's cry for union with Him.[107] This may also be the underlying thought of the rabbinic story which tells how Onias the Circle-Drawer once, in time of drought,

[104] Ser. 14, p. 39a.
[105] Ser. 36, p. 96a.
[106] Ser. 46, p. 122.
[107] Ser. 31, p. 77b—Ps. 40, 2.

placed himself at the center of a circle which he had drawn and called on God to answer his prayers for rain. It was as if, standing there at the center of the circle, he had said: "I entreat Thee with my prayers, and expect an answer to my plea, for I have achieved perfect union with Thee."[108]

In fact, the essential aim of the Torah is to effect the complete union of our souls with God. It stresses the life of the spirit and seeks to purge the soul of all grossness and the evil that defiles, because, in the words of scripture: ואדם אין לעבוד את האדמה ואד יעלה מן הארץ, when man has divested himself of all crude, material notions and desires, he becomes like an ethereal vapor, ascending godward.[109] It also enjoins upon us the frequent use of prayer, because the word תפלה, which may be derived from פתל, to twist, entwine, signifies the soul's fusion with God through devout and earnest prayer.[110] Hence the need of כונה in prayer, for unless prayer is the sincere and whole-hearted expression of our yearning for God, unless it voices a genuine inner feeling, an actual soul-experience, it degenerates into the vain repetition of the parrot, the unintelligible chirping of the bird, meaningless and devoid of efficacy.[111] Our prayers are peculiarly effective, helping the soul to wing itself aloft unto God, when they are the utterance of a heart vibrant with emotion, when they are saturated with our tears.[112]

Moscato, as we can readily see, was a mystic at heart, who was drawn to mysticism by the natural proclivities of his mind. His fondness of, and deep reverence for, the Kabbalah, at times so puzzling to those accustomed to the lucidity of his thought and the cogency of his reasoning, may have been the result, rather than the cause, of his overwhelming fascination for the hidden, the mysterious, the unexplored, in the

[108] *Ibid.* [109] *Ibid.* p. 81a. [110] *Ibid.* p. 78a.
[111] Ser. 20, p. 54a. [112] Ser. 45, p. 121a.

realm of religious truth and experience. For despite his protests that he means to steer clear, in his sermons, of the enigmatic and abstruse,[113] he frequently indulges in kabbalistic hermeneutics,[114] and discovers symbolic meanings in Jewish ritual and custom, equal to any found in the זהר.[115] In fact, he bemoans the gradual decline of our interest in the Kabbalah and its mystical interpretations. Behind the written word of the Torah, he insists, there may be always found a secret meaning. There is an aperture, as it were, a tiny window, in the sacred word through which the initiate can see and behold mysteries not visible on top.[116] But, alas! "for these many centuries, there has been a noticeable deterioration in the power to penetrate into the hidden mysteries of the Torah. And today, sad to say, on the ladder we have been gradually descending, we have reached the lowest rung. Our eyes have grown so dim that we can barely see through them. The plain people perish for want of insight, which the leaders seem unable to supply. Yet, we are confident, the day is not far off when, along the stream of wisdom, there will spring up once again those goodly trees bearing fruit that will bring healing to the soul."[117]

His own mystic bent, together with his excessive preoccupation with the literature of mysticism, must have rendered him susceptible to the visions, the hallucinations, to which medieval mystics seem to have been subject. In one instance at least, in a memorial sermon, he apostrophizes the deceased, whom he loved and revered in life, in the following words: "I remember a dream I dreamed only nine days after your death. You appeared to me as you were when lying prostrate on your bed of pain, in the last throes of your struggle with

[113] כי אין לנו עסק בנסתרות לפי כונת הדרוש—Ser. 51, p. 132a.
[114] See Ser. 31, pp. 80a–81a, also Ser. 51, p. 132a. [115] See Ser. 37.
[116] Ser. 7, p. 21a— צהר תעשה לתיב"ה. [117] *Ibid.*

death. I approached your bed and craved your final blessing, which you graciously granted me by laying your hands upon me. I then beheld you arise and begin to ascend a gigantic ladder, a ladder reared upon the earth but reaching up unto heaven, on which you soon disappeared as do all the noble souls of the departed."[118]

But, it should be remembered, while he sanctions, and himself frequently employs, the usual methods of the mystical writers in interpreting Scripture figuratively in order to reveal its deeper spiritual significance, he deprecates the tendency to view biblical statements with which certain religious rites have long been associated, as pure figures of speech. There are those, he bewails the fact, who read the Bible as secular literature and who therefore attempt to interpret as figurative the passage, for example, on which the injunction concerning the phylacteries is based, thus striving by sheer adroitness to exempt themselves from the duty of observing practices clearly indicated in the Law. They seem to think that the foundations of our faith are unstable, volatile. "They float on the surface of the Torah, as if it were a liquefied, flowing substance, with nothing in it that is solid, permanently fixed, and deeply rooted."[119] These wilful "nullificationists" are excelled in their treacherous designs only by those who outwardly profess to accept all the principles and practices the Torah enjoins upon us but inwardly harbor most flagrant unbelief. All such vile hypocrites, who lurk in secret places to lure the innocent away from the path of faith, should be shunned by all as dangerous to the integrity and stability of our religion.[120]

[118] Ser. 33, p. 89b—Of course, it may well be that he was not reciting what appeared to him as an actual personal experience, but was merely employing a familiar oratorical device to heighten the dramatic effect of the particular occasion.

[119] Ser. 7, p. 21a. [120] Ser. 4, p. 15a.

The supreme duty of suffering Israel is to cleave to the Torah, to cherish its teachings and to live in accordance with its precepts. "And even though, as wanderers, we walk through the valley of the shadow of death for thousands of years to come, we should never cease to treasure the Torah, our sacred heritage; for it is our only comfort in affliction."[121] Israel is the eternal people. We have suffered untold hardships, but God will redeem us in the end. The time of our redemption may be fixed, but it is not unalterable. The power is given us to hasten the coming of the dawn, when the gloom that envelopes us will be dissipated.[122] We must fight our way to light and freedom, not with weapons of steel, but with implements of the spirit. "In these days of dense darkness, it behooves us to lift up our voices in earnest prayer to the God on high; for prayer is our only weapon of defence against the harassing forces of darkness. Surely, the light of day will soon shine upon us."[123] In fact, it is this emphasis on the spirit that separates Israel from the nations of the earth. The nations of the world depend for their glory and prosperity on temporal power, on political supremacy; Israel wins exaltation through the perfection of the Torah and the possession of true knowledge. The nations of the world become reduced in their status through loss of political power; Israel suffers deterioration only when the light of truth begins to wane, and ignorance and folly dominate the horizon.[124] We are designated as a kingdom of priests; and inasmuch as "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth," the citizens composing our kingdom must be filled with wisdom, must be supreme masters of the Torah. This is the sole qualification of Israel for the tasks laid upon him; in its deficiency lies our downfall.[125]

[121] Ser. 21, p. 57b. [122] Ser. 51, p. 133b.
[123] Ser. 44, p. 120b. [124] Ser. 33, p. 85b. [125] *Ibid.*

4

A contemporary of Moscato, Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen, of Padua and Venice, in a sermon dedicated to Moscato's memory,[126] deplores the perverseness of the times which makes people eager to listen to agadic dissertations but loath to follow halaḥic discussions. They "spurn the substantial food that nourishes and strengthens, and hanker after the delicacies, the sweet titbits, that titillate the palate but leave the body unfed."[127] He then commends the skilled preacher who, like the physician, tries to conceal the acrid flavor of the medicine that heals underneath a sugary crust that gratifies the taste. In such a passage, one may discern a veiled criticism, as well as a bold extenuation, of Moscato's style and method of preaching. For, certain it is that Moscato parted company with the majority of the preachers of his day. His aim was not theirs; the technique and content of his sermons could, at best, excite the admiration, not the emulation, of his contemporaries. He blazed a new path in Jewish homiletics, which only preachers of subsequent generations could recognize and follow.

[126] שנים עשר דרושים, Warsaw, 1875.
[127] *Ibid.* Ser. 3, p. 20b.

VI.

AZARIAH FIGO

Critic of Life

I

IF Jewish preaching in sixteenth-century Italy found in Judah Moscato its most brilliant exponent and guide, it was the voice of Azariah Figo that best spoke the thought and most authentically reflected the life and spirit of the seventeenth century. Italy, the cradle of the Renaissance, reared them both; the aroma of the new age clung to their very garments. Judaism, with its rich lore, its life-encompassing ideals, its time-tested discipline, they championed with equal force and ardor; the Jewish spirit vibrated in all their work. Both were master-builders, divinely gifted preachers, whose art imparted to the Jewish sermon fresh vitality and power and significance, investing it with a high degree of literary excellence. Yet, withal, in their respective preaching, they manifested mental attitudes or moods of such opposite tendencies as to set them widely apart in outlook and aim even as they were clearly separated in time. Moscato joyously accepted the new spirit abroad in the land. He felt quickened and strengthened by the revived interest in the secular learning of the ancient world. He sought to appropriate it, to distil from it an essence that would have the power to persuade men and win them to a more loyal, because more intelligent, adherence to the teachings of Israel's Torah. Figo, on the other hand, while in his early youth he revelled in the newly-found knowledge, and apparently never wholly freed himself from the temptation to drink from foreign cisterns,

soon began to chafe under the dominance of his youthful preoccupations. He discovered, to his great amazement, that his excessive devotion to the "handmaid" served only to estrange him from the true "mistress," Jewish learning as embodied in the Talmud and kindred works. And so he violently wrenched himself away from the intellectual pursuits of an earlier day and calmly retreated within the "four ells of the law," there fighting valiantly to ward off the seductive charms of the wily temptress.

"God knows and is my witness," he declares in a notable passage, "that as soon as I emerged from my early youth, during which time, as if to add to the natural frivolousness that characterizes this period of life, I passionately pursued such vain things as secular studies of all kinds, my eyes were suddenly opened, by the grace of God, and I saw myself covered with shame for having placed the accidental above the essential. Yes, I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself for having slackened my interest in the fundamental studies, such as the Talmud and its allied branches, studies which, revealing to us the divine laws that must rule our lives, have the power to instil in us true notions of what constitutes spiritual growth and happiness, to attain which is, after all, our sole task in the world. But while bemoaning my remissness in the past, I could not but also dread the dismal prospect stretching before me. What if the enchantress should continue to hold me in her thrall and deprive me forever of the priceless love of my true affinity?

"And so, I resolved to put away this handmaid and give myself completely to my true mistress, hoping by this total absorption in the Torah to crowd out the very memory of the sins of my youth. Henceforward I devoted my energy to the mastery of the Jewish sources, attending with strict regularity the Yeshiba of my native city, presided over by the local

rabbis. Thus, closely confined within the four ells of the law, I labored diligently, until in the course of time, by the graciousness of God's favor, I was called to Pisa to minister to this celebrated community, though still young in years and of limited experience. There I remained for many years, amidst those truly worthy and pious people, regretting only the scarcity of men of Jewish learning and of those books to which I had grown attached."[1]

Figo voices in these lines a familiar twilight mood such as must have enveloped the heart of many a disenchanted youth of his day. The Renaissance first broke upon the horizon of the Italian Jew like a roseate dawn, dispelling the dark shadows of the past, and flooding his life with new light and hope and joy. Humanism, with all that it implied, spelled for him greater freedom, broader tolerance, deeper sympathy, the essence and refinement of a higher culture. He greeted it with the rapture of an ardent lover. But this triumphant mood was destined to suffer a speedy eclipse. The hosts of reaction are never far behind the vanguard of progress. They are camp-followers for a time, awaiting the moment most auspicious for an organized attack. The schism in the Church created by the Reformation was the signal for the Catholic hierarchy to marshal its forces and by such well-known devices as the censorship of books and humiliating personal restrictions, to suppress all forms of infidelity, of which the Jew, of course, was deemed the most guilty. And so a series of Popes arose, such as Julius III, Paul IV, Pius V, Gregory VIII, and Clement VIII, who revived severe restrictions long dead and introduced others of their own malicious invention, all calculated to degrade the Jew, to destroy the chief sources of his strength, to break down his will to live. Under such circumstances what more natural than that the sensitive Jew

[1] הקדמה, גדולי תרומה, p. 3c.

should feel impelled to withdraw from a culture that was as ephemeral as it was spurious and hasten to his own secure and permanent abode, the "four ells of the law"?

This grand renunciation, however, in the case of Figo, was made either too late or not quite complete enough to affect the essential character of his preaching. His sermons still bear the imprint of the new impulses that swayed men's hearts in the Italy of his day. That striving after beauty of thought and perfection of form, in emulation of the works of antiquity; that sense of the continuity of history, the uniformity of natural law, and the identity of human nature; that passion for inquiry and criticism; that keen awareness of the external world of nature and of the currents and problems of contemporaneous life and thought,—all salient features and finest offshoots of the new spirit of the age,—we find to a marked degree inherent in Figo's homiletical work. To be sure, the Catholic reaction, unleashing the dark and sinister forces of a relentless hierarchy, had cast a pall upon his spirit even as it had shrouded Jewish life with gloom and despair. The galling restrictions, the cruel expulsions, the impious conflagration of books, produced their customary effects. They hurled the Jew back upon himself to retreat within himself, cleaving all the more tenaciously to the products of his own spirit, the treasures of his own past. But, while intensifying the devotion of the intellectual Jew to his own literature, a consummation least contemplated, the papal decrees could not contract an horizon widened by influences over which the Church had no control, nor stifle impulses and tendencies generated by forces the Church itself dreaded to face. Nor could Figo perform the miracle of liberating himself completely from the interests and influences that moulded his life and outlook in his younger days. He might drown the memory of the sins of his youth in the deep "sea of the Talmud," but he could not

eradicate from his consciousness the enriching experiences of his youth. He might cast off the "handmaid" to lavish all his affection upon the "mistress," but he could not obliterate the vivid impressions wrought on his plastic mind by the avowed infatuation of his early youth. His work, naturally enough, suffered from these internal spiritual conflicts, these psychic inhibitions; but the originality of his mind remained unimpaired. The mantle of Moscato did not fall upon his shoulders; but his own spirit and creative power placed him in the front rank of the very greatest of Jewish preachers. In fact, to subsequent generations, not Moscato, but Figo, stood forth as the unexcelled master of the preacher's art; not the נפוצות יהודה, but the בינה לעתים, embodied the supreme pattern of the Jewish sermon.

2

Azariah Figo was born in Venice in 1579. During his childhood and early youth he attended the schools of his native city where he received a tolerably good secular education. But the acquisition of secular knowledge did not long satisfy the inner cravings of his soul. He thirsted for Jewish learning, for a thorough mastery of the Talmud and its compendia. To attain this end, he enrolled in the local Yeshiba, presided over by the well known Talmudists, Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen and Ben Zion Zarfati.[2] In this Yeshiba, he remained deeply engrossed in his Jewish studies until 1607, when, though only a young man of twenty-eight, he was elevated to the rabbinate of Pisa. There he labored for twenty years, teaching and preaching and ministering to the other various needs of his congregation, as well as preparing his dialectical commentary to the ספר התרומות of Samuel ben Isaac Ha-Sardi, under the modest title: גדולי תרומה, implying that the

[2] Abba Apfelbaum, רבי עזריה פיגו, p. 11.

worthiest of his comments were but the direct offspring of Ha-Sardi's work.[2a] Meanwhile, his reputation as profound scholar and eloquent preacher spread over Italy, so that in 1627 he was recalled to his birth-place to assume the spiritual leadership of the sephardic congregation.[2b] It was here, in Venice, that he completed and saw through the press his halahic commentary,[2c] and it was also here that some of his best sermons were preached. In 1647, while in Rovigo on a peace mission,[2d] he was suddenly seized by some severe illness from which he never recovered. A year after his death, in 1648, a volume of his sermons, bearing the title בינה לעתים, was published in Venice, a collection that forms a most precious contribution to Jewish homiletics.

The בינה לעתים comprises seventy-six sermons, preached on various occasions and on diverse religious themes.[3] While, in the main, the sermons revolve around the feasts and fasts of synagogal observance, as only twelve of the sermons deal with purely ethical themes, the volume unfolds before our

[2a] נדולי תרומה, הקדמה, Zolkiev, 1809, p. 4b.

[2b] בינה לעתים, Lemberg, 1797, Ser. 34.

[2c] בל"ע, Ser. 35.

[2d] Apfelbaum, p. 75.

[3] The Venice edition, 1648, affixes, by mistake, the numeral 75 to the last sermon of the volume. The error arose from the careless repetition, by the printer, of numeral 73, making it head the seventy-fourth as well as the seventy-third sermon. The Lemberg edition, 1797, the one used for reference in this study, indicates a total of seventy-eight sermons but actually contains only seventy-six. Here, the mistake may have been inadvertent or wilful. Since the publisher decided to divide the book into two separate volumes and to transfer the first two sermons, with which the Venice edition began, to the opening of the second volume, it may well be that in the process he failed to adjust the numbers to the new disposition, designating the first sermon in the second volume as thirty-four instead of thirty-two. On the other hand, it is also likely, as Apfelbaum surmises (ר' עזריה פינו, p. 72), that the publisher sought by this legerdemain to augment, for the prospective purchaser of the book, the impression of its bulkiness.

gaze the larger panorama of Jewish life and thought in their manifold aspects and relations. For the religious institutions of the Jew are deeply rooted in the stirring events and spiritual triumphs of the past; to lay bare their inner significance, as becomes the true preacher, is to interpret the soul of the Jew, with its hopes and aspirations, its ideals of love and of duty, its whole moral reaction to the forces and influences of life. Hence, Jewish preachers in all ages, even when expounding the lesson of the day only on some special occasion, contrived to make their message comprehend, in the totality of their preaching, a large area of religious thought and ethical obligation. And this is especially true of Figo, a preacher of such singular intellectual power and spiritual insight, whose בינה לעתים reveals his true kinship with the children of Issachar, "men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."[4]

In fact, it is Figo's conviction that to understand the times and know what Israel ought to do constitutes the chief function and most difficult task of the preacher. For the times, Jewishly conceived, are fixed and specific and of considerable diversity. There is a time of love and of singing, a time of trouble and of mourning, a time of the return of the year and of judgment, a time to seek the Lord, a time to act, a time to keep silence, a time to be gracious, a time for peace.[5] And to

[4] 1 Ch. 12,33.

[5] The framework of the בל"ע is of unique design. It opens (Lemberg edition) with a group of seven New Year sermons, bearing the caption עת משפט, and is followed by a series of six sermons on repentance, headed עת תשובת השנה. Then follow, in succession, four Succoth sermons, עת האסף; two Hanukkah sermons, עת בית ה'; three Purim sermons, עת נקמה; nine Passover sermons, עת צאת; two special sermons, עת לדרוש (the Venice edition opens with these two sermons), one being an installation sermon, preached in Venice when he assumed the leadership of the sephardic congregation, and the other a sort of thanksgiving sermon, preached on the occasion of the publication of his גדולי תרומה; eight sermons preached on texts from the Sayings of the Fathers, עת לעשות; five

know what Israel ought to do at such times and have the courage to summon them to their tasks in words of earnest exhortation,—is not this the most solemn call that comes to Israel's preachers?[6] Books have their uses. Much valuable information and instruction are contained in their pages. But their effectiveness is as nothing compared with the certain and instantaneous emotional response awakened by a message brought by word of mouth. When the ear listens to instruction emanating from a vital personality, other effects, besides those flowing from its content, make themselves felt, such as the emotional quality of the speaker's voice, the impressiveness of his appropriate and graceful gestures, and other similar aids to effective speech. Propelled by this additional force, the spoken word will sink deep into the heart of the hearer and sprout forth in concrete forms of conduct.[7] This is the end for which the preacher must always labor, to guide others in the path of spiritual well-being.[8] This should be the main burden of every sermon, no matter what the occasion on which it is preached, to stimulate in the hearer a passion for self-improvement and increased spiritual power.[9] And this, too, is the supreme need of the hour, that the people shall learn to turn a more attentive and sympathetic ear to vigorous and fearless exhortation, and that the preacher shall not be deterred by any craven timidity from proceeding with his task as monitor and guide in face of the all-too-evi-

---

Shabuoth sermons, עת דודים; five sermons dealing with the destruction of the Temple, עת צרה; four sermons preached on the Sabbath of Comfort and five sermons preached in the month of Elul, עת קץ; three sermons on prayer, עת הזמיר; four sermons on carefulness in speech, עת לחשות; four sermons on benevolence, עת לחננה; four funeral sermons, עת לספוד; and one sermon preached at a circumcision ceremony, עת שלום.

[6] Ser. 5, p. 7d.

[7] P. II, Ser. 48, p. 16c: אזן שומעת תוכחת חיים בקרב חכמים תלין—Prov. 15,31.

[8] P. II, Ser. 77, p. 53d. [9] P. II, Ser. 76, p. 52d.

dent distaste of the many for such outspoken and courageous preaching.[10]

But this critical attitude toward the shortcomings of others, it must be ever borne in mind, imposes upon the preacher the gravest of all responsibilities, that of keeping his own character and conduct free from blemish and reproach. One dare not rebuke others for their faults and failings, exhorting them to live a life of spotless purity, unless he has purged his own soul of its impurities and imperfections.[11] Besides, what makes for true effectiveness in preaching is not so much the exhortation of the sermon as the example of the preacher. His own life is the best homily; his own deeds speak most impressively.[12] "Whenever I attempt to preach to you, dwelling upon the evil that exists in your midst and deigning to proffer a remedy for the many ills, I am overcome with fear and begin to tremble . . . For the best preacher is a man's upright life. That speaks to the heart, even though it utter not a sound. What the preacher does, and not what he says, makes a lasting impression. How then can I presume to criticize your conduct, when I myself am lacking in worth, poor in good deeds, and possessed of but little knowledge and understanding? How dare I admonish others when I myself stand in greatest need of such admonition? My only justification for lifting my voice at all is that I am my own best audience. I preach mostly to myself. If I address myself to others it is because I deem it the best way of impressing the truth of the lesson upon my own soul. Besides, after voicing my convictions in the hearing of others, as I do when I preach, I am no longer free to act in any but a consistent manner; I am thus constrained to practice what I preach."[13]

The conception of the sermon as a criticism of life, with

[10] P. II, Ser. 49, p. 17d.
[11] P. II, Ser. 49, p. 18a.
[12] P. II, Ser. 37, p. 4c.
[13] P. II, Ser. 66, p. 40.

individual and social betterment as its main objective, is of very ancient origin. The prophets of Israel made it the guiding motive of their soul-stirring message. The early agadists, with whom the broader interpretation of the scriptural lesson was of primary concern, never failed to draw their analogies from the political and social conditions of the day and to apply their conclusions to individual character and conduct. Later preachers, even the most purely intellectual among them, never hesitated to criticize the moral views and habits of their contemporaries with the utmost vigor and candor.[14] But Figo, as we have seen, viewed the exhortation with its attendant critical analysis of indefensible conditions and practices as an indispensable ingredient of the sermon, and, while his published sermons fail to exhibit a rigid uniformity in the employment of this method, he yet boldly exemplified in his preaching what he so strongly advocated.[15]

Few of the evils that menaced the religious and moral stability of his generation escaped his attention, and he discussed them in his sermons with a frankness and fearlessness the most courageous of latter day preachers might well envy. Was it the sensuality of the day that jarred the chasteness of his nature? He did not restrain his words within the bounds of politeness, but boldly asserted that, as regards sexual im-

[14] See, for example, Isaac Arama, עקדת יצחק, Vol. 1, Portal 20, p. 227, Warsaw, 1904. Cf. p. 179, above.

[15] There is ample evidence that many of his sermons were either written or rewritten after delivery. He informs us on several occasions that some thoughts expatiated on in the spoken discourse, he deemed unnecessary or unfit for wider publicity. "I dwelt at some length on many of the details of this subject, which, however, I do not care to repeat in writing" (P. II, Ser. 77, p. 54b). "I jot down here only the main points, though they formed but a small part of what I then said" (*Ibid.* p. 54c). "In this connection, I took occasion to exhort the people with reference to the sins to which all the bodily members individually are subject, but I shall refrain from mentioning them in writing" (P. II, Ser. 48, p. 17a).

morality, not the gross act alone, but all forms of irregularity, must needs be condemned. "Take the not uncommon habit of perpetually staring at women, whether they be married or single, an indulgence that must inevitably lead to graver offences—is there no need for improvement here? . . . We do not seem to appreciate the gravity of this sort of sexual looseness with its unwholesome consequences. How often, in the streets of the city, do we see men gaze intently upon the passing forms of married women! Why, let a bride just emerging from under the canopy, start on her way to the synagogue, attended by her bridesmaids, and hosts of men will range themselves in rows, all along the line of march, feasting their eyes on the beauty of their figures and the splendor of their attire."[16] Or, was it the self-indulgence, the love of luxury, the extravagance of the people, that claimed his attention? He pronounced his judgment with equal force and candor. "We are still lacking in humility and proper submissiveness; hence the prolongation of the period of our exile. We are fully aware of our subjection in the world, but we do not conduct our lives as becomes subjects of other nations. We should shun pleasure and power. In matters pertaining to our physical comforts, such as food and raiment and house decorations, we should give some indication of our lowliness and anguish of spirit. But we act otherwise. Though in exile, we live like royal personages. Our homes are stocked with abundance. We dress in garments of the finest fabric, aping the princes of the land. Our tables are laden with the dainties of kings, unsurpassed by the sumptuous banquets of Solomon. We live on a scale befitting the heyday of our national life. There is no want that remains unsatisfied."[17] Or, was it the widespread indifference to ritual observance that vexed his spirit? He flayed it mercilessly. "But we who are designated as men, we

[16] P. II, Ser. 66, p. 41b. [17] P. II, Ser. 50, p. 18d.

in whose heart is implanted the divine law, offer praise unto God before we partake of any food and after we have eaten, thus acquiring ownership, as it were, in the produce of the earth. Unfortunately, our generation has grown extremely lax in the observance of these ritual practices. Men will enter fruit-stores and help themselves to grapes or figs or pomegranates, without giving a thought to the prescribed blessing, as though the world had no Master. I recall the experience I once had with one of our most prominent members. He reached for some fruit in my presence and fell to eating it without reciting the required blessing. I remonstrated with him, expressing my surprise that a man like him should be guilty of such an omission. His only reply was that the habit of ignoring this practice was so strong upon him that he was not conscious of the omission. However, as he had not yet consumed all of the fruit before him, he condescended to conform to the law before partaking of the rest. But no sooner had he finished than he began to take leave without troubling himself about the special grace to be recited after such light refreshment. I was not slow to call his attention also to this omission. He looked bewildered, not knowing what I had reference to. Of course, he had heard of grace after meals, but he did not seem to know anything of this special blessing. And so I recited it to him. He could not have looked more startled had some new revelation flashed upon his vision. This is what we are getting when we habitually treat with indifference the requirements of our ritual law! And what may we expect of the young, if they who rear them eat and drink like heathen without blessing God's name?"[18]

Nor did the grasping, self-centered business world, with its love of gain and want of sympathy, elude the sharp sting of his fearless castigation. "We can readily see that the cause

[18] P. II, Ser. 66, p. 40d.

of our financial troubles (incident to high taxation) is none other than the exorbitant interest rates levied on loans. What plea could even an Abraham make on behalf of this city, saturated as it is with the blood of the poor? These hapless ones, driven by hard circumstances to borrow money from the rich of the land, are devoured bodily by the usurious rates exacted from them. And so prevalent has the practice become that few seem to betray any real consciousness of its nefarious character. Yet, let a group of Jews enter a non-Jewish restaurant and partake of ham or any other prohibited viand, and the whole community would be most ready to stone them to death! . . . And what shall we say of those who piously shrink from the more patent forms of usury, but who have no scruples to issue loans on homes in which they live rent-free, or sublet and pocket the proceeds, until the entire debt is paid off? . . . Even the customary dealings in foreign exchange, some forms of which are free from objection, present, in their other forms, aspects of doubtful legality of which an otherwise upright merchant may be unaware. My contention is that in all such matters, the religious leader should be consulted that he might guide the people in paths clear of all possible stumbling blocks."[19]

But, while Figo regarded the sermon not as an end in itself but as the means to a higher end, he spared no effort to clothe it in a form befitting its dignity and purpose. Structurally, his sermons follow faithfully the best models of the Jewish pulpit in Italy. The נפוצות יהודה seems to have influenced him profoundly in his method of preaching. Like Moscato, Figo adheres closely to Cicero's outline of an oratorical composition, consisting of four parts: the exordium, the proposition, the analysis, and the conclusion, all of which revolve around a biblical text, נושא, and a rabbinical text, מאמר. Un-

[19] P. I, Ser. 10, p. 15b.

like the נפ"י, the בל"ע indicates only the occasions on which the respective sermons were preached; it gives no titles and no summaries of the propositions and divisions. These minor deviations in the external form of the latter volume, however, inasmuch as the inner structure is substantially the same in both, may have been due either to the posthumous character of the work, or to the natural reluctance of its author to follow too closely the literary form of another craftsman.[20] Yet, though similar in structure, the sermons of these volumes differ greatly in style and content. Moscato laid much emphasis on beauty of expression; Figo strove for clearness and simplicity. Moscato seized upon ideas that sparkled in their brilliancy; Figo rested content with familiar truths that needed but greater transparency and freshness to make them convincing and appealing. Moscato gathered material for his sermons from the flowers in the garden of the intellect, poetry and belles-lettres, as well as from its more robust plants, philosophy and history; Figo chose to weave his thoughts out of the more durable strands of the practical and the useful, physiology,[21] physical geography,[22] astronomy,[23] and similar popular sciences.[24] Moscato was inclined toward mysticism and fond of quoting from kabbalistic writers; Figo steered clear of mysticism and apologized when referring to interpretations derived from kabbalistic works.[25]

[20] Figo expresses a deep-seated abhorrence of the tendency only too common among authors to use inventions not their own. "My intimate friends know only too well that from early youth I have detested that low and degrading practice of wrapping in a toga not one's own, of glorifying myself with the labors of others"—הקדמה, גדולי תרומה, p. 4b.

[21] See P. I, Ser. 6, p. 9a; Ser. 8, p. 11b; Ser. 9, p. 14a; P. II, Ser. 69, p. 45b Ser. 76, p. 51d; etc.

[22] P. I, Ser. 2, p. 2d; Ser. 24, p. 31d; P. II, Ser. 34, p. 1a; Ser. 46, p. 13a; etc. [23] P. II, Ser. 18, p. 15b. [24] P. I, Ser. 16, p. 24a.

[25] "Although it is not my custom to dabble in the mysterious whose depths I am unable to fathom, I yet refer to this mystic interpretation which, though

Moscato, conversant with the lore and letters of the ancients, frequently resorted to foreign sources for information and inspiration; Figo, more limited in his knowledge of general literature, depended mostly on the Jewish sources of which he was master, and on the inventiveness of his own mind. Hence, while the former fascinates us with the variety of his themes and the versatility of his powers, the latter impresses us with the originality of his thought and the profundity of his feeling.

Indeed the paucity of material from secular sources proved a help, rather than a hindrance, to the structural completeness of Figo's sermons. It facilitated a more deft grouping of the parts as well as a more thrifty management of the material at hand. Unencumbered with an overabundance of illustrative matter derived from general literature, whether of ancient or contemporaneous origin, the framework of his sermons exhibits a clearness of outline, an orderly arrangement of ideas in logical sequence, such as is often obscured and thrown into disorder by excessive elaboration and congestion. Simplicity and brevity,—these are of the distinguishing characteristics of the בל״ע;[26] and these essential qualities of good preaching are more often vitiated than aided by the copious use of miscellaneous information.

Accordingly, in these sermons, nothing so impresses us as the simple plan underlying their faultless construction. From the exordium to the conclusion, the message of the preacher, in its gradual unfoldment, compels the attention and wins the reasoned assent of the reader. No words are wasted, no

found in the Zohar, occurs also in other authoritative writings"—P. II, Ser. 50, p. 19b.

[26] When on occasion Figo feels constrained to expatiate at some length on a particularly significant aspect of his message, he craves the patience of his hearers for the resultant prolixity. "And now, my worthy hearers," he pleads, "bear with me, if I deviate from my customary conciseness of speech. . . ." Ser. 23, p. 30d.

ingenious devices are employed, no superfluous examples are multiplied. The seemingly elaborate agadic support the main theme or any aspect of it receives, is calculated to fortify the reason with the evidences, so cogent and weighty, from authoritative sources. The thought is amplified and corroborated by the homily, never supplanted or interrupted by it. The preacher, good hunter that he is, has his gaze ever riveted on the game he means to bag, all the while he is furbishing his implements and making ready for the capture.

The approach to his sermon, his exordium, consists generally of a statement of the origin of the question; rarely does he open with the historical setting of the text.[27] His chief purpose in this initial undertaking is to prepare the mind to understand the truth of his message, to appreciate its importance, its timeliness, its practical worth. His exordium is always tributary to the proposition; it directs our attention to the central theme. At times this is accomplished in one succinct sentence, as when he opens a Passover sermon with the following direct statement: "Of the many mysterious symbols associated with the observance of the Feast of Passover, I choose to single out for special study and comment the use of the four cups of wine."[28] Occasionally, a brief reference to the conclusion of a preceding sermon in the same series, followed by a declaration of his purpose in the one presently to be given, seems to suffice.[29] More often, however, the preacher regards the general background of the proposed subject as the most suitable source from which to derive his exordium. A sermon on repentance, for instance, is introduced with the thought, carefully presented, that disease-breeding substances are expelled from the body either by natural means, as when the inherent strength of the constitution subdues the infec-

[27] Ser. 12, p. 19a. [28] Ser. 26, p. 33a.
[29] P. II, Ser. 39, p. 5c.

tious elements and eliminates them through the pores of the skin, or by artificial means, as when bleeding is resorted to or some powerful drugs are administered. Now, repentance aims to rid the soul of its sickness, its sins. When it is motivated by love, the process is a natural one; when actuated by fear, it is an artificial one.[30] Or, in a sermon preached on Rosh Hashanah coincident with the Sabbath day, in which the proposition is advanced that the solemn admonition of the preacher, on such a day, when the blasts of the Shofar are unheard, may well be used to sound the call to repentance, the exordium develops the idea that man's intelligence enables him to devise substitutes for impaired or limited natural functions. Eye-glasses, for example, restore weak vision to normal strength, thus correcting a defect by substitution. The microscope, in magnifying objects too minute for ordinary perception, serves a similar purpose. A feeble memory, we know, is often aided by sheer association of ideas. In like manner, in the realm of the spirit, certain religious forms and observances have the tendency to remind us of God's presence in the world, to make us visualize the great events of the hallowed past. When such practices are denied us, as when we are mute and incapable of raising our voice in prayer, our teachers have recommended fitting substitutes. The meditations of the heart, they say, will prove just as efficacious, in such cases, as the prayerful utterances of the lips. How, then, and by what means, when deprived of the use of the Shofar, shall the soul be stirred to repentance?[31] Or, to cite one more instance, the proposition that the righteous man is he who learns to know the nature of God as revealed in His dealings with nations and individuals, and who, after having ascertained the essential attributes of God, strives to conform his own life to the divine pattern, is introduced with the general

[30] Ser. 8, p. 11b. [31] Ser. 7, p. 10a.

thought that the perfection of any performance must be gauged by the extent to which the result achieved compares with or approaches the finest accomplishments of man in the self-same field. In the mechanical arts, it is the work of the expert craftsman that must be used as the standard of measurement. In the field of morals, the worth of a deed can be determined only when lifted in the serene light of the most august ethical conduct ever attained by man. And in the domain of the purely religious, nothing short of God's own ways and character can serve as the criterion of our judgment, nothing short of His divine attributes can measure the success or failure of our own lives.[32]

The body of the sermon aims to develop the proposition of which the exordium is the logical precursor. The texts, both biblical and rabbinical, usually suggest the number and content of the divisions, though not infrequently they serve only to confirm the reasonableness of the central thought, its natural ramifications and wider applications being supported by biblical verses and agadic passages other than those with which the sermon is headed.[33] With Figo, whatever is germane to the subject, even when only slightly or remotely related to the text, finds its appropriate place in the fuller development of the sermon. The proposition, and not the text, defines the limits of the sermon and determines the extent of its divisions. It is to the steady employment of this method that Figo owes some of the most striking effects of his style: unity and continuity of thought, simplicity and conciseness of expression, variety of theme and completeness of treatment. And it is also to the employment of this method, enabling him, as it does, to swerve, when necessary, from his chosen text and marshal apt passages from other authoritative

[32] P. II, Ser. 34, p. 2a.

[33] P. I, Ser. 4, 9, 21; P. II, Ser. 34, 48, etc.

sources, which require only the art of the skilled interpreter to make them buttress the position of the preacher, that he owes his wide popularity as a great homiletical exegete. To this very day preachers of the old school are turning to the בל"ע, not only for inspiration but also, and perhaps chiefly, for instruction in the art of homiletical interpretation, in which Figo still remains the undisputed master. His work is a veritable mine for the seeker after the precious ore of old-time Jewish preaching. Not a page but that abounds in unexpected flashes of brilliant exegesis. Not a sermon but that increases our admiration of his indubitable excellence as an adroit yet withal earnest and profound homiletical interpreter. Whether he undertakes to expound a difficult scriptural verse or to elucidate an enigmatic rabbinic passage, he brings to bear upon it all the acumen of the skilled dialectician and all the meticulous exactitude of the trained critic. The principles governing this species of exposition are, of course, unacceptable to the scholar; they are principles with which the Midrash has long made us familiar. But whatever the worth and validity of the method employed, for purposes of edification and spiritual stimulation such exposition has always proved more potent and effective than that of sound scientific criticism, with which the preacher is little concerned.

The secret of Figo's charm and influence as an homiletical exegete lies in the fact that his interpretations are simple and natural, and luminous with a deeper insight into the spirit of the text. In interpreting, for example, the familiar prayer: "Remember us unto life, O King, who delightest in life, and inscribe us in the book of life, for thine own sake, O living God," he observes that the final phrase למענך אלהים חיים holds the key to the true meaning of the entire passage. We ask for length of days not that we might enjoy for a longer period the physical pleasures of the earth but rather that we might be

given more time in which to put forth our energy in behalf of God's holy causes.[34] The reason why God had no respect to Cain's offering is clearly indicated in the opening phrase of the biblical account: "And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord."[35] An offering to be acceptable unto God must be of the very first fruits of a man's effort; but Cain consecrated unto God the results of his labors only מקץ הימים, after many days had passed.[36] Pharaoh's pronouncement, after Joseph had interpreted his dreams, that "forasmuch as God hath shown thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou,"[37] was more just than hyperbolical. Divine inspiration comes to a man in exact proportion to his own natural resources. A man possessed of much wisdom will, with the aid of God, acquire more. Hence the correctness of Pharaoh's statement, that, since God has made all this known to Joseph, he must have been endowed with great understanding to begin with.[38] Isaiah's prophecy that in the days to come "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,"[39] contains a profounder truth than the superficial levellers of society pretend to find in it. The simile "as the waters cover the sea" is of prime significance here. The surface of the sea, though smooth and seemingly even, covers depths of varying degrees. Similarly, the knowledge of God will fill more abundantly the lower levels, the humbler hearts, the deeper spirits. For the lower the bottom of a vessel the more ample its capacity for freightage.[40]

As a rule, the original turn he gives to a biblical word or phrase, which enables him to delve deeper into the inner content of the verse, is conditioned by some linguistic diffi-

[34] Ser. 13, p. 20c. [35] Gen. 4, 3. [36] Ser. 4, p. 6a.
[37] Gen. 41, 39. [38] P. II, Ser. 55, p. 24a.
[39] Is. 11, 9. [40] P. II, Ser. 38, p. 5a.

culty the commonly accepted interpretation seems to present. In commenting on the verse: הנני נשפט אותך על אמרך לא חטאתי,[41] he raises the question why if it means to convey the sense that God will judge Israel for denying his guilt, נשפט rather than שופט is used here. Nor is it necessary to make the *niph'al* expressive of mutual action when the force of the passive has its rightful place here. For when one asserts his innocence, despite his affliction, he means to imply that the punishment he is made to suffer by God is totally undeserved. In this way he brings it about that God's justice will be questioned. Hence the divine rebuke: If you profess innocence, then in the eyes of the world not only you, but even I, will stand in judgment.[42] A somewhat similar difficulty confronts us in the verse: שתולים בבית ה' בחצרות אלהינו יפריחו.[43] The customary rendition: Planted in the house of the Lord, they shall flourish in the courts of our God, calls for the *qal*, יפרחו, rather than the *hiph'il*. But here, too, the deeper meaning of the verse justifies its present form. The Psalmist endeavors to assign a reason and a motive for man's existence in this terrestrial world. The souls of the righteous, in God's wisdom, have been transplanted from their original heavenly abode because while there (בבית יהוה), they were only planted (שתולים), receiving their own spiritual nourishment, but since they have been placed in this nether world (בחצרות אלהינו), they have been blessed with the privilege of serving others besides themselves (יפריחו), to cause others to grow and blossom.[44] In like manner, the verse: בכל עת אהב הרע ואח לצרה יולד, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity,"[45] contains as regards its syntactical form an imperfect parallelism; either the participle or the imperfect should be used in both parts. The change in tense must indicate a change in

[41] Jer. 2,35. [42] P. II, Ser. 52, p. 20c. [43] Ps. 92,14.
[44] P. II, Ser. 41, p. 7b. [45] Prov. 17,17.

thought, presenting us with contrasting rather than parallel ideas. Hence, the true meaning of the verse must be: A friend loveth at all times (in joy and in sorrow), but a brother who loveth in adversity, יולד, is yet to be born.[46] Again, the customary rendering of the verse: בישישים חכמה ואורך ימים תבונה,[47] as meaning: "with the aged there is wisdom, and in length of days understanding," derives little support from the words as they stand. בישישים should be paralleled by ובאורך ימים. Obviously, something other than a parallelism is contemplated here. As a matter of fact, what the author wishes to stress in this verse is none other than the familiar thought, that the persistence of a good, its durability, rather than its intrinsic worth, lifts it to the height of supreme excellence. Thus, wisdom is with the aged, and ואורך ימים, if that wisdom endures, it rises to the height of understanding.[48]

In all instances, whether the difficulty that impels the searching analysis of the preacher be stylistic or theological in character, every word or phrase susceptible of special elucidation receives the closest scrutiny, that the deeper meaning of the text may thus be laid bare. The following passage, for example, which seems to abound in syntactical deficiencies, assumes a more compact and artistic form once its subtler sense becomes evident: ויהי בימים ההם ויגדל משה ויצא אל אחיו וירא בסבלתם וירא איש מצרי מכה איש עברי מאחיו: ויפן כה וכה וירא כי אין איש ויך את המצרי . . .,[49] "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian . . ." The passage, as translated, contains some superfluous words and letters. The ב in בסבלתם

[46] P. II, Ser. 57, p. 26b.
[47] Job, 12,12.
[48] P. II, Ser. 50, p. 18a.
[49] Ex. 2,11–12.

could well be omitted. The word מאחיו seems to serve no necessary purpose. The repetition of וירא in the first sentence could hardly be defended on stylistic grounds. The customary rendition, therefore, taking no cognizance of these evident redundancies, is altogether inadequate and hence untenable. The real thought expressed here, simple though it be, reveals a finer grasp of the niceties of the situation even as it evidences greater precision in language. Moses going forth among his brethren, fell to pondering over their bitter lot (וירא בסבלתם), wondering why God saw fit to subject them to such grievous trials and hardships. But suddenly he was made to witness an incident that furnished a solution to this baffling mystery. An Egyptian smote a Hebrew while in the midst and in the very sight of his brethren (מאחיו). But none took his part. None was man enough to rush to the defence of his brother (וירא כי אין איש). It was then that the real cause of their servitude and helplessness was clearly revealed to the future emancipator.[50] In like manner, the following verse, faulty in style, will appear without a flaw, when the interpreter's art is skilfully applied to it: ויאמר שאול לנערו והנה נלך ומה נביא לאיש כי הלחם אזל מכלינו ותשורה אין להביא לאיש האלהים מה אתנו,[51] "Then said Saul to his servant: 'But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God; what have we?'" The seer is first referred to as איש, and then as איש האלהים. Why this misleading variation? Then, too, the final query מה אתנו, in view of what precedes it, is unnecessary and repetitious. To surmount these difficulties, we need but penetrate more deeply into the thought of the text. The value and appropriateness of a gift can be gauged in one of three ways: the gift itself, because of its intrinsic worth, may be treasured; the donor may be a celebrated person, in which case the

[50] Ser. 25, p. 32c. [51] 1 Sam. 9,7.

thing of smallest value may be highly prized; the recipient may be of low estate in which case anything, however little its value, will suffice to evoke appreciation. Now Saul, in interposing his objection to the servant's suggestion, that they go to inquire of the man of God, seeks to demonstrate its utter impracticability. If we go, he says, what thing of value have we to give even to an ordinary man (לאיש) not to speak of a gift such as will be appropriate for this man of God (לאיש האלהים). Of course, any token coming from men of high station will be received with much gratitude; but what have we to recommend us (מה אתנו)? The servant acquiesces in the argument advanced, but ventures to introduce a new element apparently overlooked by his master. I will present the man of God, he counters the objection raised, with something of my own possession, and from a mere servant any trifle will prove acceptable.[52]

At times, it is not the language of the text but the thought expressed therein that offers the greatest difficulty, as when the theological implication of the verse seems out of harmony with the accepted norms of Jewish thought, or when the ideas are self-contradictory, platitudinous, or nebulous. In all such cases, the thought itself must be probed, dissected, and illuminated before it can be brought into complete harmony with Jewish ideas or with the ways of clear and logical reasoning. Take, for example, the verse in Genesis: ויאמר יהוה אלהים הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו לדעת טוב ורע ועתה פן ישלח ידו ולקח גם מעץ החיים ואכל וחי לעולם,[53] "And the Lord said: 'Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever.'" It would appear from this statement that God was loth to have man possess the knowledge of good and evil. Yet, without such knowledge, how

[52] P. II, Ser. 51, p. 19a. [53] Gen. 3,22.

could man rise superior to brute creation? A more minute analysis of the underlying thought of the text, however, will disclose a deeper insight into the character of God and the destiny of man. What enriches our lives and brings us perfect joy comes not from the things we receive from others but from those things we ourselves, by strenuous personal effort, acquire. Man, to be sure, might attain unto the knowledge of good and evil by mere accident; he might eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. But then his nature would simply undergo a sudden transformation. He would thus be turned into a being who is naturally endowed with such knowledge. The joy of personal achievement would not be his. The same holds true of the eternal life. Now, God, who is ever concerned about the happiness of his children, chooses to have man come into the possession of the precious gifts of the spirit by a life of obedience, that through aspiration and struggle his soul may be refined and merit life eternal.[54]

Or, to give an instance of a simple scriptural text in which the thought seems self-contradictory, take the verse: זבחי אלהים רוח נשברה לב נשבר ונדכה אלהים לא תבזה,[55] "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." In the first part of the verse, the thought stressed is that the broken spirit excels ritual sacrifices; in the second part we are informed that it is not despised by God, but evidently not rated very high. To remove the apparent contradiction, it is necessary to remember that lowliness of spirit may be produced by crushing external circumstances as well as by inner spiritual experiences. The Psalmist draws a clear-cut distinction between the two. When the broken spirit is the result of a deep-seated humility, which comes from the recognition of God's greatness and man's insignificance, it surpasses anything of a ritual char-

[54] Ser. 15, p. 23a. [55] Ps. 51,19.

acter. But even when the humility is born of external causes, such as physical suffering and sorrow and loss (נדכה), though baser in origin, it is not altogether despised by God.[56]

Again, as an example of a text that appears self-evident and commonplace in thought, take the verse: ולך אדני החסד כי אתה תשלם לאיש כמעשהו,[57] "Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for Thou renderest to every man according to his work." Nothing surely could be more gratuitous than for the Psalmist to repeat here the well-worn truth that God rewards a man in accordance with his good deeds. Besides, such dealing with man could hardly be characterized by the quality of mercy; common justice dictates such treatment. The thought must of necessity be fresher and sounder than that, to conform to the high literary standard of the author in question. In reality, what we regard as central in the statement of the Psalmist should be construed as merely incidental. The idea set forth in this verse is that only God is capable of performing an act of pure mercy. Man, as in the case of providing decent burial for the dead, for instance, from whom no direct reward can be expected, may rise to a high level of disinterested kindness, but his motive, even in such a case, may not be entirely unmixed, inasmuch as God renders to every man according to his work; the expectation of divine compensation may leaven the deed.[58]

And, finally, to cite an example of the scriptural text that is obscure in thought, take the verse: אני שלום וכי אדבר המה למלחמה,[59] "I am all peace; but when I speak they are for war." Aside from the fact that the first letter, if the parallel is to be exact, should be deleted from למלחמה, the extreme vagueness of the clause "but when I speak," pointing to no definite utterance that might even be implied, is mystifying,

[56] Ser. 13, p. 21c. [57] Ps. 62,13.
[58] P. I, Ser. 70, p. 46a. [59] Ps. 120,7.

to say the least. It certainly marks a deviation from the customary lucidity of the Psalmist's expression. But the thought of the writer is as clear as it is profound. As regards peace, men fall into two distinct classes: there are those who speak peace with their lips but conceal a seething volcano of hate within; and there are those who are pugnacious in manner, speak contentiously, but are quite peaceful within. Hence the significance of the Psalmist's pronouncement. God says: I am all peace, also when I speak; My inner being and its outer expressions are altogether harmonious. But they, the wicked, (even when they speak peace), it is למלחמה, to disarm the opponent so as to wage war against him all the more successfully.[60]

And the same method of homiletical interpretation Figo employs in the exposition of the rabbinic text. His exegesis of agadic passages bears the same striking characteristics. It is simple, natural, thorough, and penetrating, always bringing to light a truth not readily discernible. The mishnaic statement,[61] for example, which reads: כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא שנאמר ועמך כלם צדיקים לעולם יירשו ארץ,[62] "All Israel have a portion in the world to come, as it is said: 'And thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land,'" presents a number of textual difficulties. In the first place, the phrase "all Israel" would seem to imply that there are no sinners among them who are unworthy of a portion in the world to come, an assumption contrary to fact. Moreover, the very biblical verse adduced in support of the declaration makes the inheritance of the land conditional upon a life of righteousness, thus apparently excluding all those who fail to qualify in this manner. In the second place, the idea of "a portion in the world to come" would be conveyed more correctly by חלק בעולם instead of לעולם. In the third place, dealing as the

[60] P. II, Ser. 78, p. 55b. [61] San. 10,1. [62] Isa. 60,21.

statement does with something yet to be, the future rather than the present should be denoted by the verb employed, using יהיה להם in place of יש להם. However, the simple fact is that this pithy saying of the rabbis contains a much more profound and significant thought than the current interpretation permits us to see. Indeed, the wide gap that exists between the outlook of our Jewish teachers and the philosophy of non-Jewish thinkers is nowhere else so graphically indicated. The latter assert that the chief end of man's life on earth is the perfection of his mind, his reason. To them, therefore, the ascetic, who secludes himself in solitude, in pursuance of this end, lives an exemplary life. Judaism denies the validity of such a philosophy. It insists that nothing which cannot be achieved by all men may properly be viewed as an ultimate end. Human perfection, to be universal, must flow not from the reason but from the will, not from the development of the rational faculties but from the cultivation of a sense of obedience. Hence, Judaism stresses righteousness, the living of the prescribed life, or the will to live it, which is within the reach of all men, rather than the perfection of the intellect, which is open only to the gifted few. This is the truth expressed in the text before us. כל ישראל יש להם חלק—all Israel have a definite task to perform in life, by which, as if by a ladder, they can mount לעולם הבא, to a state of spiritual perfection.[63]

Whatever the rabbinic utterance the preacher introduces in the course of his sermon to illustrate and strengthen his main thesis, it is its profounder meaning, its spiritual significance, that excites his interest and challenges his powers. In the statement ascribed to Simon ben Joḥai, that הככר והמקל נתנו מכורכין מן השמים,[64] "the loaf and the staff (rod) wrapped together came down from heaven," he finds the emphatic,

[63] P. II, Ser. 36, p. 3b. [64] Lev. r. 35,6.

albeit poetic, expression of the Jewish position that good and evil proceed from the same source, and do not, as is erroneously claimed by certain philosophers, represent two different powers or principles. The loaf that sustains life, and the rod, often employed to reduce vitality, are wrapped together, emanate from the same principle,—good and evil alike come from God.[65] The dictum of R. Ammi that אין תפלתו של אדם נשמעת אלא אם כן משים נפשו בכפו,[66] "A man's prayer is not heard unless he puts his soul in his hand," conveys to Figo not so much the thought of concentration in prayer, important though it be, as the more fundamental idea of spiritual self-possession in all the manifold relations of life. Not until a man has become the absolute master of the warring forces within him, not until he has placed his נפש, his passionate nature, under perfect control, will his prayers prove acceptable to God.[67] Rab's lofty conception of the nature of the joys reserved for the righteous in the world to come, when צדיקים יושבים ועטרותיהם בראשיהם ונהנין מזיו השכינה,[68] "the righteous shall be seated with crowns on their heads, sustained by the glory of the Shekinah," yields to Figo a thought of added spiritual significance. The crown of the righteous, we note from the text, rests not על ראשיהם, on their heads, but בראשיהם, in their heads. It is the depth of their understanding, the nobility of their thought, the keenness of their vision, the purity of their speech, that constitute the royal crown of the righteous.[69] And how luminous is his interpretation of that rabbinic passage in which Moses' vision of God is characterized as one that came to him through אספקלריא מצוחצחת, a polished glass, while that of the other prophets as one transmitted through אספקלריא מלוכלכת, a dim glass![70] The adjectives, says Figo, do

[65] Ser. 29, p. 36b. [66] Ta'an. 8a.
[67] P. II, Ser. 63, p. 35b. [68] Ber. 17a.
[69] P. II, Ser. 18, p. 16a. [70] Lev. r. 1, 14.

not, as they are popularly understood, qualify the degree of visibility but differentiate between two distinct mediums. There is the ordinary glass that may be described as מצוחצחת since both sides are clear, and there is the looking-glass that may well be designated as מלוכלכת since one side is stained with quick-silver. Herein lies the difference between the vision of God as vouchsafed to Moses and that revealed to the other prophets: Moses saw God himself, as if through a window-pane; the other prophets saw only His image, as reflected in a mirror.[71]

From some of the examples cited above, it must have become evident that in Figo, as in almost all of his contemporaries, the tendency to interpret biblical verses and rabbinical passages symbolically was rather strong. And, indeed, the symbolic method of interpretation, long the fashion among Jewish preachers, could not but possess a peculiar fascination for a mind ever on the alert to discover the deeper meaning, the more striking application, lurking in a given text. Thus, in the verse: "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not,"[72] night is made to represent the terrestrial world, and the beloved sought, the First Cause. But He cannot be found in the external world; nor in the "broad ways," the upper realms, the revolving spheres. Not even the "watchmen," our faculties of mind and heart, can have any true knowledge of Him. It is only in the process of living, through personal experience, that we discover Him.[73] Thus, too, R. Eliezar's statement that the night is divided into three distinct watches, each of which is signalized by some characteristic natural phenomenon,[74] typifies the three different states of darkness in human life. There is the darkness of ignorance, when the

[71] P. II, Ser. 44, p. 11a. [72] Cant. 3,1.
[73] Ser. 28, p. 35a. [74] Ber. 3a.

"ass brays;" there is the darkness of persecution, when the "dogs bark;" and there is the darkness of death, when the "infant suckles at its mother's breast," when man, the child of dust, returns to the bosom of mother earth.[75] Again, the Ark symbolizes the accessibility of the Torah to the average human intelligence; the Cherubim denote the Written Law and the Oral Law; the Table speaks of the ample provision in the Torah for all our spiritual needs; the seven-branched Menorah indicates that the seven sciences are fully incorporated in the Torah; the Altars point to the need of overcoming, of consuming as by fire, the material desires and ambitions which are the most formidable obstacles to the proper fulfilment of the Torah; the Laver represents the power of the Torah to cleanse and purify the mind so as to enable it to become a fit abode for divine truth.[76]

But, despite his predilection for such interpretation, Figo exercises much moderation and self-restraint in its use, resorting to it only when the simpler, more literal, though equally homiletical, interpretation fails to adjust satisfactorily the textual difficulties or to impart in adequate measure an insight into the spirit of the text. In the main, viewing his homiletical work as a whole, we may say that the repeated professions of his fondness for the פשט, which he feels constrained to make whenever some exigency demands a deviation from his usual style and method,[77] are more genuine, because attested to by actual practice, than the expressions of a similar character we meet with so frequently in the works of our early preachers.

It was this mastery in the art of homiletical exegesis that

[75] Ser. 18, p. 25d. [76] P. II, Ser. 45, p. 12c.

[77] "Although it is not my practice to search for mysterious and symbolic ideas underlying the plain meaning of biblical texts, yet, in this case, I fear that a slight deviation from the simpler method of interpretation is unavoidable"—Ser. 3, p. 4d.

enabled him to draw the great bulk of his illustrative material from purely Jewish sources. Scriptural verses and agadic passages, aptly chosen and skilfully interpreted, very often served to confirm the truth of his message, to demonstrate the cogency of his reasoning. At times, too, the works of such medieval thinkers and commentators as Maimonides, Naḥmanides, Baḥya, Abravanel, and others,[78] furnished him with many an analogous idea or a fresh point of view. Not infrequently, however, he derived his illustrations from the popular sciences, especially medicine, and from the simple facts and phenomena of nature. Sin, for example, he finds to bear striking resemblance to bodily ailment. What sickness is to the body, sin is to the soul. We know that as long as the normal heat of the body receives no increment from any external source, the preservation of one's health is a comparatively easy matter. It is only when some foreign substance enters the blood, which raises its temperature, that sickness ensues. Similarly, the spiritual part of man, when in a state of normality, is naturally dowered with a mysterious but none the less real power that impels it to heed the wise admonitions of a saner judgment, to live in perfect obedience to the divine behests. But when some foreign heat, such as emanates from violent passion or mental aberration, gains entrance into the soul, overpowering the natural fervor for spiritual integrity and harmony, then sickness, enervating and ravaging sickness, prostrates the soul.[79] Again, the preacher is the physician of the spirit. He who would undertake to prescribe a remedy for some physical malady must first make a thorough diagnosis of the case. He must carefully observe the symptoms, must endeavor to locate the source of the trouble, must determine the extent to which the

[78] See Sermons 27, 31, 43, 60, 61, 66.
[79] P. II, Ser. 69, p. 45b.

disease has taken root in the constitution of the patient and the probable duration of its course, before he can hope to prescribe the medicine that may effect a speedy and complete cure. Now, the preacher, when confronted by so much spiritual sickness, dare not do less for his patients.[80] Or, to illustrate the thought that it is God's will that we dedicate our possessions to His service, and that the more of our knowledge or financial means we dispense to those in need of it the more will our own stores increase, he cites as perfect analogy the mother who gives suck to her babe. The milk in the mother's breast will increase with the demand made by her offspring. The more she gives, the more she can give.[81]

Again, love of freedom is deeply rooted in our nature. Nothing so irks us as subjection, and nothing so elates us as liberty. All animate creation shares this instinct. Do not birds sing their most joyous songs when free to soar heavenward? And do they not moan pitifully when held captive in a cage?[82] Or, to disclose the true forcefulness of the divine utterance: "I remember for thee the affection of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown,"[83] he dwells on the difference in attitude between the bride and the long-espoused wife. The latter will cheerfully accompany her husband in his sundry migrations, heedless of the discomforts and hardships which these may entail. Not so the recent bride. The joy of life still courses in her veins. She craves unalloyed pleasure, song, luxury, exhilaration. When she goes forth with her beloved, it is to stroll in the parks and gardens of the city. Israel, however, when yet only a bride, manifested the spirit of the long-tried and devoted spouse.[84] Again, speaking of the grave re-

[80] Ser. 10, p. 14b. [81] Ser. 4, p. 6c.
[82] P. II, Ser. 46, p. 13a. [83] Jer. 2, 2.
[84] P. II, Ser. 57, p. 26c.

sponsibility resting upon us as human beings to guard our tongues from evil, he conjures up a picture of an impoverished member of the nobility who yet stands in great favor with the king. In fact, the king esteems him so highly as to wish to honor him above all other courtiers. And so he invests him with a richly-ornamented sword, to be worn by no one but himself, and to be unsheathed only in the king's service. In the course of time, however, this favorite of the king becomes so ungrateful as to venture to lift this very sword against the king. How contemptible such an act must appear in the eyes of all men, and how difficult it is to devise a punishment that would fit such a crime! Is not the tongue the badge of man's chief distinction in the world, granted to him by God as a token of His love; and for man to use it for aught else but for His honor and glory, is it not to be ungrateful for the blessed privilege bestowed on him?[85]

In the Conclusion, the usual method Figo employs is to recapitulate the main ideas of the sermon in such a manner as to indicate the relation they bear to the biblical text. At times, he terminates the discourse with a brief but fervent prayer.[86] More often, the appeal which ordinarily runs through the body of the sermon as a continuous application, is placed at the very end, thus marking the conclusion as well as the culmination of the message. In most instances, the appeal is compact in form, direct and simple in manner, and hopeful in tone. "And now, my brothers and friends," he opens one of his characteristic appeals, "look unto Abraham your father and be like him. Rise up to meet the needs of your time. Those of you who are learned should teach others; the strong should come to the rescue of the weak; the rich should use their means to relieve the destitution and distress of the

[85] P. II, Ser. 68, p. 43c.
[86] Ser. 68, p. 43c.

poor."[87] "Come, then, friends," he phrases his appeal on another occasion, "let us feel ashamed of our conduct and return to God who will surely heal us. Let us resolve to abandon all dishonest dealings, and to return to the rightful owner what we have dishonestly acquired."[88] "And now, young men," to cite one more example, "let me say this to each one of you: Direct your attention to the selection of a course of conduct that will crown your life with happiness. Dedicate your youth to higher purposes, and your latter days will be exalted. May you, together with all Israel, be inscribed unto life. Our strength we derive from God, we who have clung to Him from the early days of our youth."[89]

3

While preachers, generally speaking, seldom originate new ideas or found new systems of thought, no true preacher who registers in his sermons an authentic reaction to the life and thought, the motives and experiences, of a given generation, can fail to embody in his work a definite and systematic philosophy of life. What he believes and thinks and feels, as well as what he wishes to see accomplished, of which the sermons are clear records, form in their totality a distinct and complete outlook upon the world and man's place and function in it.

This is especially true of a preacher like Azariah Figo, who, though master of the homily in its literary and inspirational aspects, never rested content with the excellence of his own performance nor ever lost sight of the fact that conviction must precede moral conduct, and intellectual assent pious counsel. For much as he valued sound homiletical principle and the fervid, effective exhortation, he eagerly sought to im-

[87] P. II, Ser. 41, p. 8b. [88] Ser. 10, p. 16b.
[89] Ser. 4, p. 7a.

plant in his followers the habit of thought, that they might be grounded in doctrines which reason could not overthrow and espouse ideals of which sober judgment could not but approve. He aimed to instruct as well as to admonish, to enlighten as well as to edify. In his sermons, we shall therefore find a consistent, if not a continuous, exposition of what he believes Judaism to be and what demands it makes of its adherents; what the spiritual ideals of Israel seek to accomplish in the world, and what part the Jew is to play in the weaving of life's newer pattern.

To Figo, as to all the great leaders in Jewish thought, the belief in the existence of the one God and the supremacy of His will, is central in the teachings of Judaism and indispensable to any comprehensive view of man's life and destiny on earth. This is the foundation on which Judaism has built its vast superstructure, and this constitutes its chief distinction among the religions of the world. Christianity, in proclaiming the man-God, vitiates the purity of the God idea. Mohammedanism, while professing a belief in the unity of God, exalts its false prophet to an absurd degree, and thus discredits the sanity of its doctrines.[90] Judaism alone affirms the absolute oneness of God and stresses the spiritual nature of His being and the sovereign power of His will. Natural phenomena, the fixed laws of nature, do not invalidate the belief in individual Providence. God rules by natural law, to be sure, but He will reverse the natural order whenever His justice demands such an alteration. The pagan nations, led astray by philosophical theories, may repeat the assertion that, having created the world and established its laws of operation, God lets it run its course without change or interference. But Judaism insists that God has not abandoned the world to the mercy of mechanical forces, that He ceaselessly exercises His power over

[90] Ser. 26, p. 33b; P. II, Ser. 55, p. 24c.

it, guiding and controlling it and, when necessary, changing it.[91] Not even the will of God is fixed and unchanging. Let infidels deny the efficacy of prayer, the potency of repentance, blinded as they are by the false assumption that God's will is adamantine and unyielding. We cling to the faith that ours is not a capricious God, that He wills only what is reasonable and just, and that in His dealings with man His will is largely determined by man's conduct. The function of prayer and repentance, therefore, is not to change God's will but our own disposition. We mean to change our conduct, upheld by the assurance that no arbitrary spirit will dominate His judgments.[92]

God is ever present and active in the world. When fire consumes our homes, when young men fall by the sword, when thunderstorms work havoc in our midst, it boots us little to ascribe these tragic occurrences to the cruel accidents of nature. We act more wisely and in greater harmony with truth and reality when we view these extraordinary disturbances as the clear manifestations of divine displeasure and proceed to repent of our sins and make amends for the wrongs we have inflicted on others.[93] Natural philosophy busies itself with effects, endeavoring to trace them back to a variety of causes; Judaism begins with the primary cause, God, and refers all effects to His will.[94] Hence, proper conduct, which is advocated by non-Jewish thinkers as well, will not by itself produce perfection of spirit, unless it be the expression of a ready submission to the will of God, unless, in so acting, we subject our wills to God's will and do not merely follow the promptings of our own reason.[95] We pray with the Psalmist: "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God,"[96] and for

[91] Ser. 3, p. 5a. [92] *Ibid.* p. 5b.
[93] Ser. 12, p. 20b. [94] Ser. 16, pp. 23d–24a.
[95] P. II, Ser. 77, p. 54a. [96] Ps. 143,10.

no other reason whatsoever.[97] And when we refrain from evil it is not because our own wisdom dictates such conduct but because God abhors evil and we cannot but do His bidding. Even as the obedient and docile patient, we take the medicine prescribed for us by the great Physician, undisturbed as to whether we can assign a reason for such prescription or not.[98] Ours the duty to live the religious life, in all things, in matters that appeal to the understanding as well as in things that baffle it, out of a pure sense of submission to the will of God.[99]

But what is God's will? How shall we learn to know it? We believe that God who brought the world into being without an effort made His voice heard to our fathers when they stood at Sinai and on other memorable occasions. The revelation from Sinai, witnessed by our forebears and attended by many a wondrous manifestation, established the Torah on a sure and lasting foundation. Doctrines that have their origin in human reason are always in danger of collapse, for the reason is weak and uncertain. Experience alone can buttress truth permanently.[100] And the interpretation of the truths so revealed was not left to the puny mind of man; it was conveyed by God himself to the physical senses, the sense of sight and the sense of hearing. Hence, the traditions transmitted to us we can trace back to God.[101] We have but one Torah; the written law and the oral law are equally important and sacred because equally divine in origin.[102] Both enunciate, clearly and imperiously, the will of God. To act in conformity with the teachings of the Torah is to make the will of God supreme in our lives.

Judaism thus rests on the Torah, the direct revelation of

[97] P. II, Ser. 72, p. 48b. [98] P. II, Ser. 77, p. 54a.
[99] P. II, Ser. 39, p. 5d. [100] P. II, Ser. 45, p. 11b.
[101] *Ibid.* [102] P. II, Ser. 38, p. 5b.

God's will to man. This Torah, dealing with all the things that pertain to man's spiritual life on earth, is all-comprehensive, self-evident, and self-sufficient. The student of the Torah need not resort to other sources of knowledge, either for a fuller understanding of the revealed truth or for a fresh accession of necessary facts.[103] Frankly, we have no interest in theoretical science; we can dispense with Euclid's Geometry and Ptolemy's Almagest. Our sole interest is in the things of the spirit.[104] To be able to comprehend spiritual facts, no preliminary, extraneous studies are required. To be sure, the student of medicine must acquire a knowledge of natural philosophy, which in turn must be preceded by a mastery of the rules of logic. But the Torah needs no outside help, no background of proficiency in the rudiments of foreign branches of knowledge. Spiritual truth is accessible to all men.[105]

Is there no room for reason in religion? Of course, there is. In fact, Judaism imposes on us the obligation to search for the evidences of God's existence, confident that by seeking we shall find Him. Only the wicked would ban free investigation.[106] The truly religious man will never be satisfied with the proofs at hand. He will reach out for new disclosures of His presence; and in this perpetual search he will find his highest and purest happiness.[107] But, as regards the fulfilment of God's will, the faithful observance of His laws must precede any rational investigation; practice must pave the way for intelligent research.[108] We do not share the conviction, put forth by the wise men of other nations, that happiness and perfection depend on right opinions and correct attitudes. We

[103] P. II, Ser. 45, p. 12b.
[104] P. II, Ser. 48, p. 15b.
[105] P. II, Ser. 45, p. 12a.
[106] P. II, Ser. 47, p. 14a—על מה נאץ רשע אלהים אמר בלבו לא תדרש—Ps. 10,13.
[107] P. II, Ser. 48, p. 16d—ישמח לב מבקשי יהוה—Ps. 105,3.
[108] P. II, Ser. 47, p. 14c.

may err in our judgments, and we may be unjust in our attitudes, our own impressions to the contrary notwithstanding.[109] Nor will we permit ourselves to be led astray by the fallacious doctrine that it is not the method but the motive, not the deed but the intention, that really counts. This has ever been the cry of the spiritually indolent. We know that unless we translate our fine intentions into sturdy deeds, the pious wishes and unexpressed yearnings of our hearts soon evaporate and disappear.[110] There is only one way of aspiring to God, and that is by doing His will. Knowledge cannot be substituted for action; and to know God's ways without obeying His divine commands, will open no avenue of approach for God to reach us.[111] If it be true that the ordinances of the Torah are too numerous, placing a burden on the average man almost too heavy to bear, it is equally true that we are not obligated to perform all of them with meticulous care when difficulties and obstacles intervene. To observe even but one of the many injunctions of the Torah with immaculate exactitude is to attain to a high degree of righteousness.[112]

Belief may be arrived at by the efforts of reason; the commands of revealed legislation must be carried out even when not supported by reason. In matters of faith, our reason should determine our adherence; in matters of practical conduct, implicit obedience should be the rule.[113] The Torah rests on three mighty pillars: Reason, Revelation, Experience. It testifies to God's providence in three ways: by revelation, by experience, by reason. To possess perfect understanding, we must utilize and strengthen all three.[114]

The chief superiority of Israel over the nations of the earth lies just in this: that he was found worthy to be the recipient

[109] P. II, Ser. 57, p. 27b. [110] P. II, Ser. 42, p. 8b.
[111] Ser. 5, p. 7d. [112] P. II, Ser. 39, p. 5c.
[113] P. II, Ser. 47, p. 14c. [114] *Ibid.* p. 14a–b.

of the divine law of life.[115] The chief source of Israel's strength lies just in this: that he has learned to look for help not to nature but to nature's God.[116] Hence, unlike the other nations who, when they swerve from the right path, receive punishment only on account of the evil nature of the act, their own character and condition playing no part in the judgment, when Israel commits a transgression, it is not the sinful act alone, but the quality of the agent as well, that clamors for retribution. Being what he is, privileged as he has been, he must be held to greater accountability.[117] The Jew, therefore, who spurns any one part of God's law because his reason fails to approve its validity, wilfully excludes himself from the larger body of Israel, which is held together by the power of traditional law.[118] Our confession of faith: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One, epitomizes for us the whole range of Jewish belief and Jewish obligation. "Hear, O Israel," proclaims our acceptance of God's law and the recognition of our duty to hearken to His commandments; "the Lord our God," affirms our faith in individual providence; "the Lord is One," reiterates our belief in the absolute oneness of God. Thus, Torah, Providence, Unity constitute the substance of our faith and the goal of our strivings.[119] And, indeed, the integrity and spiritual happiness of Israel must ever depend on the open recognition that no experience is the accidental outcome of nature but the deliberate act of an ever watchful Providence. As long as this conviction is deeply rooted in Israel's heart, he will prosper in all his undertakings. When he falters in this his fundamental belief, and chooses to attribute to nature what rests only with God, he will be caught in the snare of the dangerous doctrine of de-

[115] Ser. 26, p. 33c. [116] Ser. 16, p. 24a.
[117] P. II, Ser. 51, p. 19d. [118] Ser. 21, p. 28d.
[119] P. II, Ser. 71, p. 48a.

terminism, from which there can be no escape and in which happiness never dwells.[120]

Israel has preserved and offers the world today a conception of spiritual culture which for its democratic basis and principle is equaled by no other in the realm of human thought. Other nations, who regard culture as the wisdom that proceeds from investigation and philosophic reasoning, tend to create and exalt an aristocracy of the intellect; Israel, in defining wisdom to consist in the perfect submission to the will of God as it stands revealed in the divine law, thus making the cultivation of the spirit open to all men, endeavors to build up instead a true democracy of the spirit.[121] Of course, Israel is greatly hampered in his spiritual task by the absence of a cultural autonomy. It is no easy matter for a Jew to remain steadfast in his faith in the lands of his dispersion. What with the coercive measures employed against him in all lands, and what with the terrible fate he is made to suffer for his loyalty to Jewish practice and belief in some lands, he finds himself everywhere in perpetual emotional distress.[122] It is not to be presumed though that these agonizing experiences serve no beneficent end. Even as the human soul grows and develops and attains unto greater perfection by the very life of struggle into which it is born, so is Israel's spirit purified and strengthened by contact with the world, its follies and temptations and cruel hardships.[123] None the less, it is true that his spiritual progress is considerably retarded by these unfavorable circumstances. But we have not abandoned the hope of ultimate redemption. We still look forward to the time when the evil purposes of our enemies will be frustrated, when the yoke of political enslavement will be removed, when complete spiritual emancipation will be achieved. When that time

[120] P. II, Ser. 68, p. 43d. [121] Ser. 22, p. 29c.
[122] Ser. 8, p. 12b; P. II, Ser. 55, p. 24b. [123] P. II, Ser. 56, p. 25c.

comes, as come it must, we shall serve our God unmolested and unhindered. Then God's power will be vindicated, and His name sanctified, throughout the world.[124]

Our opponents (the Christians) fondly believe that Israel is no longer destined to experience an earthly redemption; and to justify their contention they have to resort to some very curious assumptions. Faced as they are by numerous unfulfilled prophecies concerning the future of Israel, they try to solve the difficulty by putting forth the claim that in these prophecies Israel stands not for the descendants of the Patriarchs but for that small coterie of the faithful who, like Israel of old, proclaim and exalt the righteous life. Moreover, they further contend, these prophecies must be understood in a figurative and symbolic sense; the rebuilding of the Temple, for instance, denoting the heavenly Tabernacle. It is interesting to note, though, that while they are eager to appropriate the prophecies of good for the larger Israel, they are quite willing to surrender ungrudgingly all the prophecies of evil to the original bearer of that name. However, these preposterous claims need not much perturb us. They refute themselves. Surely, the prophetic utterance that God will never cast off all the seed of Israel[125] could refer to no one but the direct offspring of those who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai.[126] Nor do we find anywhere the slightest intimation that the words of our ancient prophets are to be interpreted figuratively. To the contrary, when the prophet says: "And the Lord answered me and said, 'Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that a man may read it swiftly,'"[127] we get the distinct impression that the prophets studiously avoided the use of mysterious and mystifying language.[128] The

[124] Ser. 19, p. 26d. [125] Jer. 31, 37.
[126] P. II, Ser. 44, p. 11b, Ser. 56, p. 25d, Ser. 55, p. 24d.
[127] Hab. 2, 3. [128] P. II, Ser. 56, p. 25d.

fact is that in the days to come, as our prophets assure us, Israel will experience a complete earthly redemption; that the long duration of our exile proves only our imperfect understanding of God's plan and purpose; and that the seed of Israel will endure to eternity, even as God's power extends to eternity.[129]

But the position of privilege in the realm of the spirit entails responsibilities corresponding thereto. The Jew, therefore, is called upon to abandon the pursuit after material things and to store up treasures that cannot be taken away from him, those spiritual treasures which enrich one's personality and truly satisfy.[130] If material wealth be his portion, he should remember that such possessions are never ends in themselves, but the means to a higher end. Money can be made to do God's work in the world, when spent to advance causes that are worthy and permanent.[131] Above all, the rich man must never forget that all riches belong to God; that the poor are God's agents, His messengers and collectors; and that to give of our means to those who suffer want is to dispense only what is God's.[132] To use his advantages aright, the man of wealth should regard himself as a trustee appointed by God and charged with the task of helping the poor and relieving the distressed.[133] In fact, whatever a man's possessions, material, intellectual, spiritual, he fails to reap the full benefit from these gifts unless he acts in the capacity of trustee whose function it is to enrich other lives. Surely, the individual cannot hope to achieve perfection in his own life and character, if in the process he neglects to help others attain unto the same perfection of spirit.[134]

Wealth may add meaning to life, provided we use it for

[129] *Ibid.* [130] Ser. 5, p. 7c.
[131] P. II, Ser. 71, p. 47d. [132] P. II, Ser. 43, p. 10a.
[133] P. II, Ser. 71, p. 47d. [134] P. II, Ser. 58, p. 28a.

unselfish purposes. Power may prove very beneficial, if it leads to self-conquest, the essence and highest achievement of all power. Intellectual accomplishments may be eminently worth while, if they do not stifle the nobler impulses of the soul, if they do not deter us from living our lives in harmony with the divine will.[135] For, after all, what is man's advantage over other creatures, in all his labors? Is it not to play the role of the sun, to do for mankind what the sun seems always bent upon doing, namely, to win all sentient beings to a fuller realization of God's presence in the world?[136]

But to labor willingly and cheerfully for the happiness and perfection of others, as well as for our own, two things are essential. First of all, humility, genuine lowliness of spirit, must permeate our lives and control our conduct. For all possible perfection flows from this virtue. It is the only key that opens the gates to the life of the spirit. It is the sole cure for the diverse ailments of the soul.[137] Pride is the source of all the evils that infest our life. It is to maintain and fortify our self-pride, that we often ignore the clearest mandates of the ethical life.[138] Moses became a true man (והאיש משה), a masterly personality, because he revered the greatness, and stood in awe of the potentialities, of other human souls; because he was humble.[139] Verily humility is a precious garment, the robe of royalty, the crowning glory of the virtuous life.[140]

But in addition to humility we must have hope and faith and vision. The chief distinction of our humanity is its unlimited capacity for spiritual growth. For the human personality is dynamic, not static. Man does not come into the world in a state of perfection. He is never finished or un-

[135] Ser. 20, p. 27d.
[136] P. II, Ser. 77, p. 53d—מה יתרון לאדם בכל עמלו שיעמול תחת השמש—Eccl. 1,3.
[137] P. II, Ser. 43, p. 9c. [138] Ser. 27, p. 34a.
[139] P. II, Ser. 43, p. 10b. [140] P. II, Ser. 61, p. 32b.

changing. He is subject to improvement, to sanctification. He ever renews his strength, and mounts upward like the eagle, soaring ever higher and higher to a fuller and larger life.[141] And in this life of aspiration we should aim at the highest, and lift our gaze unto the highest for the fulfilment of our desires. All our ambitions and strivings should bear the stamp of the divine, should partake of the character of the service of God; and for their complete realization we should depend on no one but God.[142]

4

The high regard in which the בל״ע has been held by Jewish preachers for these many generations receives thus its chief justification from the important position the work occupies in the development of the Jewish sermon. Structurally, it marks a notable advance in the direction of greater unity of thought and simplicity of expression. Homiletically, it reveals, in its exegesis, a surer and more penetrating insight into the text-material and a more consummate skill in its use. In its essential aims and tendencies, it affords a clearer comprehension of the principal function and purpose of the sermon, and a more steady determination to move toward a previsioned goal, as well as a renewed emphasis on the social character of the religious ideal, making the elevation and refinement of the individual spirit find their clearest expression in harmonious relations with the social group. If in his style and methods of composition Figo reflected the influence of his literary milieu, in his exegesis he often matched the best models of the early Agada, and in his message he rose on many an occasion to the social vision and the spiritual intensity of the ancient prophets.

[141] Ser. 20, p. 27c.
[142] Ser. 14, p. 22d.

VII.

EPHRAIM LUNTSHITZ

Champion of Change

I

EPHRAIM LUNTSHITZ, whose full name was Solomon Ephraim ben Aaron, was born in Lenczycza,[1] Poland, about the middle of the sixteenth century. While the exact date of his birth is unknown, it is safe to place it in the fifth decade of the century, since he died in 1619, March 3, less than a year after he had been relieved of his onerous duties as Chief Rabbi of Prague, presumably on account of his advanced years. His original name Ephraim received the addition of Solomon as late as 1601, when, during a severe illness, in conformity with the prevailing practice of the day, a modification in his name was resorted to as a means of breaking the spell that held him in its grip.[2] His childhood was spent in his native town, where, either at the hands of his father who was a man of some learning, or at some local Hebrew school, he received the customary training in the elements, completing which he was sent to Lublin to enrol in the Yeshiba presided over by the celebrated Talmudist Solomon Luria, to whose ים של שלמה, while yet in manuscript, Luntshitz somewhat later referred with much admiration and reverence.[3]

It was at Lublin that his homiletical powers began to unfold; for a short while thereafter, still in his early youth, we

[1] The sobriquet Luntshitz, by which he is best known, is thus derived from the name of his birth-place, the difficulty in transliteration accounting for the differences in pronunciation. [2] כלי יקר, הקדמה, Lemberg, 1888.

[3] מצורע, עיר גבורים, p. 21, Lublin, 1884.

find him in Yaroslav engaged, amidst dire poverty, in putting into proper form the first fruits of his homiletical efforts, his עיר גבורים.[4] At first, he informs us, out of deference to the older men in the pulpit, he abstained from preaching much in public, contenting himself with the steady accumulation of material for future publications.[5] Later, however, when somewhat older in years and richer in experience, he seemed to have lost all of his shyness and most of his esteem for his older colleagues. For on more than one occasion, when preaching before large assemblages, at Yaroslav, at Lemberg, and especially at Lublin, during the Conferences of the Council of the Three Lands, coincident with the great fairs, he assailed with much vigor and candor the laxity, the spiritual deadness, of rabbis and laymen alike, often receiving little more for his pains than the caustic criticism and active enmity of the self-complacent crowds who thronged to hear him.[6] "In my later years, yielding to the importunities of men of prominence, I preached in Lublin, especially during the great fairs, where Jewish leaders as well as large masses of the people forgathered. There I used to express myself quite freely touching the shortcomings of the rabbis as well as of the laity, undeterred by any consideration or fear. This boldness, naturally enough, created for me numerous enemies who heaped slander upon my name and otherwise persecuted me. . . . Of course, I could have well avoided all this wrath and uproar were I but willing to be more restrained in my utterances, or were I more chary of my personal honor. But I had long resolved to put the honor of God above my own."[7]

The leaders of the Council of the Three Lands,[8] how-

[4] עוללות אפרים, הקדמה, Amsterdam, 1779.

[5] עמודי שש, הקדמה, Amsterdam, 1773.

[6] שפתי דעת, הקדמה, Warsaw, 1882.

[7] עמודי שש, הקדמה.

[8] The province of Volhynia was not as yet included in the Council.—

ever, recognized his true worth and encouraged his efforts. They assisted him in the publication of some of his works,[9] and established him as the head of the Lemberg Yeshiba, where he remained for many years, until, in 1604,[10] he was called to Prague to assume the office of Chief Rabbi, in which capacity he served for fourteen years.

Of his homiletical output, we possess six works, four of which had been published prior to his arrival in Prague. His עיר גבורים first appeared in 1580; his עוללות אפרים in 1590; his אורח לחיים in 1595; his כלי יקר in 1602; his שפתי דעת in 1610; and his עמודי שש in 1617. He frequently refers to a large homiletical work of his bearing the title of רבבות אפרים,[11] but this work never reached publication, and no trace is left of the manuscript. Gruenwald, in his brief biographical sketch,[12] surmises that it was destroyed, together with many important documents and records, in the great conflagration that devastated Prague in 1689.

2

In the sermons of Ephraim Luntshitz we come upon a phenomenon as puzzling to the unbiased as it must be irritating to the prejudiced. Jewry of sixteenth-century Poland, constituting as complete an autonomy as Jews ever enjoyed in European countries, a veritable state within a state, presents us with a preacher of extraordinary power and artistic skill, whose works, in conception and execution, in profundity of thought and of feeling, in breadth of vision and depth of insight, in all the manifold reactions to the conditions and

---

See Moritz Gruenwald: *Rabbi Salomo Ephraim Luntschitz*, p. 19, Frankfurt a.M. 1892.

[9] הקדמה, כלי יקר.

[10] הקדמה, עמודי שש.

[11] עוללות אפרים, P. II, Ser. 16, p. 29b, Ser. 40, p. 59b; הקדמה, כלי יקר.

[12] *Rabbi Salomo Ephraim Luntschitz*, p. 38.

tendencies of contemporaneous life, bear close kinship to the choicest products of more enlightened lands. In fact, it is among the representative Jewish preachers of the Italian Renaissance that we shall find his compeers. True, he had drawn little, if any, from the luring wells of alien cultures;[13] but his mind impregnated with the best of his own culture, brought into being a species of homiletical literature, all the more notable because underived, and all the more precious because undiluted. Of course, his field of study, unlike that of most of his contemporaries in the land of his birth, was not exclusively restricted to the Bible and the Talmud. His sermons reveal a wide and intimate knowledge, even a critical understanding, of the works of the medieval Jewish philosophers and scientific commentators.[14] His frequent insistence that though the fundamentals of our faith rest on a valid tradition we are none the less obligated to prove their mysteries with our rational faculties,[15] and the further insistence that to study theology profitably one must be conversant with the physical sciences, mathematics, and astronomy,[16] may well argue more than a latitudinarian attitude on his part. And the lyrical quality of some portions of

[13] At times he makes mention of some astronomical observations (עו"א, P. I, Ser. 5, p. 8a; או"ל, p. 11b, Amsterdam, 1770), and occasionally of medical prescriptions (כ"י, בראשית, p. 5b) as well as of sundry explanations of natural phenomena (או"ל, p. 13b; כ"י, נח, p. 8a), but there is no indication that these facts were obtained from other than Jewish sources.

[14] The direct references and allusions are too numerous for citation. There is hardly a sermon in his עוללות אפרים but that affords unmistakable evidence of his having delved deep into our philosophical and critical literature. It will be of interest to note, however, that in a discourse on retribution, he adduces seven arguments in support of the reasonableness of the doctrine, each of which is derived from a different Jewish thinker: Maimonides, Ibn Ezra, Baḥya, Halevi, Saadia, and Albo.—כ"י, בחקותי, p. 78c.

[15] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 3, p. 15b, Ser. 20, p. 33c, Ser. 25, p. 39a; P. IV, Ser. 5, p. 107a.

[16] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 41, p. 59d; P. III, Ser. 8, p. 75a.

the Introductions to his works, as well as the fact that he was the author of three liturgical poems,[17] would seem to indicate a diversity of interest as well as of natural aptitude, in fields other than those carved out for him by the exigencies of his daily tasks.

The apostles of "Enlightenment," it would seem, in making servile obeisance to secular knowledge of foreign importation, have only succeeded in creating false standards of measurement whereby the real merits of men of exceptional ability and accomplishment are often obscured and sometimes obliterated because, forsooth, their powers ripened into fruitfulness under "ghetto" skies, unrelieved by atmospheric infiltrations from without. That increased freedom and power will flow into the most richly endowed spirit from a fresh accession of truth, however exotic in origin and inferior in quality, will be denied only by impervious obscurantists. But it is not at all certain, nay, it has been repeatedly disproved, that true greatness, whether of intellect or spirit, must be surrounded and influenced by the conditions of a given civilization, must express itself in certain accepted forms, if it is to thrive and attain unto enduring worth. To the contrary, we know that all genius, of whatever sort and degree, like the harp of David in the rabbinic legend, when played upon even by the midnight breezes, will produce strains that may awaken the dawn. Surely, the earliest and sublimest preachers in Israel, the Hebrew prophets, drew little upon external sources for their time-transcending and world-embracing message. Those who forever prate of the "Spirit of the Ages," may find it profitable to ponder over the illuminating words

[17] In commemoration of the tragic event that took place on February 15 (Adar 2), 1611, when an army descending from Passau invaded Prague, retiring only two years later, he composed the following three seliḥot: (1) אלה תולעת יעקב אל תראי (3) לך ה' הצדקה כי שמת בנפשנו (2) אזכרה ואשפכה עלי נפשי. See Zunz: *Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie*, p. 421, Berlin, 1865.

in which Faust offers admonition to Wagner, the would-be preacher:

> "Das Pergament, ist das der heil'ge Bronnen
> Woraus ein Trunk den Durst auf ewig stillt?
> Erquickung hast du nicht gewonnen,
> Wenn sie dir nicht aus eigner Seele quillt."[18]

In this sense, Ephraim Luntshitz may be regarded as a preacher of true originality, who did not "cook the scraps from others' fare," who, to rise to the source, employed no other assistance than what his inherited ideals and his own powers of interpretation afforded; whose own heart, as Goethe would have it, was eloquent. To be sure, he did not originate any startling truth; great popular preachers, who rise from the people and speak to the heart of the people in the language understood by the people, aim at a far less magnificent but even more precious quarry. They are the natural poets of the people, dreaming dreams and seeing visions such as the people could well claim as their very own even though they be not always conscious of their import and worth. In fact, to renew and strengthen that consciousness in the people, to purify and ennoble their impulses, to enlighten their minds and refine their spirits, to gather up the ordinary materials of life and make them glorious by the profounder interpretation put upon them,—this is, after all, the chief task of the earnest preacher. And this task, so clearly envisaged and so persistently pursued by Luntshitz, as we shall have occasion to see, called for no more extensive intellectual equipment than our own classical literature could, and did, supply. On the other hand, the native endowments requisite for the fulfilment of this august purpose, such as unfaltering conviction, penetrating vision, intrepid courage, moving power, and the

[18] *Faust, Goethes Werke*, Zweiter Band, p. 280, Leipzig.

whole range of spiritual refinements, Luntshitz, we shall presently discover, possessed in great abundance. For it was just these qualities, built into the very structure of his character, that enabled him to perceive, and impelled him to condemn, the grave abuses then so strongly intrenched in the school, in the synagogue, in the philanthropic agencies, in the entire organized life of the community. He came to grips with an intolerable order of things and raised his solitary voice against "the blind in the Jewish camp,"[19] not out of general aesthetic considerations or in the interest of political and social preferment, but solely from the highest religious motives. He apprehended that the mental and moral discipline of the Jew might become so vitiated by these impure and unseemly practices as to deaden his very soul. He therefore hastened to advocate with all the vigor at his command a number of vital changes in the educational and religious institutions of the people, which, had they been adopted by his contemporaries and carried forward by succeeding generations, might have forestalled the tragic schism in our ranks that occurred two centuries later. Such a power, such a personality, may indeed be moulded by external forces and influences; more often, however, especially when frustrated or ignored by the very surroundings amidst which it rises up, it issues from a deeper and more mysterious source, a source whence all originality commonly flows, the secret wellsprings of the individual soul.

3

Luntshitz, though widely known as a preacher of considerable merit, has been accorded scant attention by students of our homiletical literature, chiefly because his name, by the cruel logic of a just but limited estimate, has been almost ex-

[19] העורים במחנה העברים, ע"ש, p. 6a.

clusively associated with his best, his most profound and artistic work, his עוללות אפרים. That he was the author of five other volumes of sermons and homilies, less compact in thought and trenchant in style but more replete with significant details for a comprehensive portrayal of the man, his aims and outlook, is a fact of which few seem to be cognizant. Yet, the master craftsman in עוללות אפרים[20] is well-nigh eclipsed by the ardent reformer in עמודי שש;[21] the deft exegete in כלי יקר[22] shrinks in stature by the side of the passionate pleader in עיר גבורים;[23] and the prolific homilist in שפתי דעת[24]

[20] The עו"א comprises a total of eighty-four sermons, divided into four parts: the first of which, dealing with the nature and outlook of the spiritual personality, consists of six sermons; the second part, woven around the holy days and festivals, consists of forty-nine sermons: fourteen for Passover, seven for Shabuoth, five for Succoth, twelve for Rosh Hashanah, three for Yom Kippur, four for the Sabbath day, two for Hanukkah, and two for Purim; the third part, intended for special occasions, consists of twenty-two sermons: eleven for weddings, nine for the initiation into the Abrahamitic covenant, one for the ceremony attending the redemption of the first-born son, and one for the occasion marking the attainment of religious majority; the fourth part, dealing with such themes as Torah, Worship, Benevolence, consists of six sermons, the fifth being a series of homilies, ten in number, for funerals. Inserted in their appropriate places (pp. 78d–83a, 84b–94b), pentateuchal texts from all the weekly portions, with their proper uses briefly indicated, are generously supplied, for the benefit of those who need material for sermons at weddings and at rites of circumcision. The volume concludes with a sermon for the Sabbath preceding Rosh Hashanah.

[21] The ע"ש, denoting the Pillars, made of marble as well as six in number, upon which the world rests: Torah, Worship, Benevolence, Justice, Truth, and Peace, is divided into twenty-four chapters, each of which is in reality a sermon on some aspect of these Pillars, excepting the twenty-fourth in which the Conclusions reached in the preceding discourses, the ethical and spiritual truths therein applied, are summarized in succinct form and with telling effect.

[22] The כ"י is a running commentary, in his usual homiletical style, to the entire Pentateuch. Because of its great popularity, it has been incorporated in the מקראות גדולות (Warsaw 1902), at the conclusion of each weekly portion.

[23] The ע"נ is composed of two parts, the first of which, comprising the larger portion of the volume, embraces a complete series of Sabbath sermons

steals silently away at the determined approach of the inspired ethical guide in אורח לחיים.[25] In fact, if we view his works in the light of his own express convictions as to what must constitute the chief task and greatest opportunity of the consecrated preacher, we shall find that the עו"א, with all its intrinsic merits, falls short, in some important respects, of the standard he had set for himself and repeatedly urged upon others. For Luntshitz insisted that the test of a sermon did not lie in the degree of its own perfection but in the measure of its influence on human life. "I have written a few books, and my aim in all of them has been not to fascinate with novel interpretations but to edify with ethical instruction such as my generation stood in greatest need of."[26] The homiletical framework of the sermon he therefore regards not as an end in itself but as the means to a higher end, always subordinate in nature and importance to the spiritual stimulation therein

based on the weekly readings from the Pentateuch. The second part, entitled "Introductions and Portals," opens with a penetrating and scintillating Preface and is followed by two "Introductions" and two "Portals." Of the former, one deals with Self-Conquest and the other with the fundamentals of the religious life, such as Torah, Worship, and Benevolence. The "Portals" consists of two groups of discourses, one woven around the subject of Repentance and the other around the general theme of Ethical Qualities.

[24] The ש"ד, designated by the author as a companion volume to the כ"י, contains three hundred and seventy-four individual homilies on all the weekly lessons from the Pentateuch. They represent, we are informed, carefully selected excerpts from the regular Sabbath sermons preached in Prague in the course of three years, 1607–1609.—See הקדמה.

[25] The או"ל opens with an Introduction couched in his best style, in which he surveys the Jewish scene and finds much to lament. This is followed by "The Foundation of Faith," a clear statement of what he deems to be the very essence of the Torah. The body of the work consists of two very elaborate sermons, one intended for the penitential season and the other for the Feast of Passover. In structure as well as in content, these sermons, despite their unconscionable length, rise to very high levels, and must be classed among the best of his efforts.

[26] ע"ש, הקדמה.

provided.[27] To Luntshitz, preaching in the Synagogue can have no other function to perform than that of justifying God's ways to man,[28] of demonstrating our great love for men by reprobating every one of their evil deeds,[29] of removing all obstacles from our path by the softening of petrified hearts with words of castigation.[30] To combat all evil, to inject into the disturbing elements of the community an ingredient that will have the power to cure them of their perverseness,—this he deems to be the most serious task confronting the true preacher.[31] Gauged by this estimate of the sermon's worth, the עו"א neither embodies the ideal pattern of the preacher's art nor exhibits to any appreciable extent the fiery temper of the moral crusader.

It is always difficult to form a complete estimate of an author's achievement on the basis of one of his works, even though it be the one best calculated to reveal the full force of his talent. In the case of Luntshitz, such a proceeding would be even dangerous because grossly misleading. For in character and capacity he represents a strange composite of two essentially different sets of attributes. On the intellectual plane, we discover in him the calm, patient, erudite, and painstaking craftsman, whose vast store of homiletical material, coupled with an amazing fertility of invention, could not but win the admiration and homage of his own and subsequent generations. On the other hand, on the ethical plane, we encounter in him the impatient, impetuous, resolute and unyielding moral reformer, whose fearless courage often defied, but seldom cowed, the heedless multitudes, though it never failed to embitter his own spirit. In most instances, as regards the temper of his sermons, either the one mood or the other predominates. In such works as the כ"י

[27] הקדמה, או"ל. [28] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 43, p. 61d.
[29] כ"י, דברים, p. 98c. [30] הקדמה, ש"ד. [31] הקדמה, או"ל.

and the ש"ד, for instance, the subdued homilist prevails; in all the Introductions to his collected sermons, the staunch but tempestuous reformer sways the scepter. On occasion, as in the או"ל and in the ע"ש, he succeeds in happily combining the two, if not always in one composition at least in one and the same volume, wherein the practical applications of the respective sermons, plucked from their original stems, are replanted, so to speak, on the outskirts of the volume; and it is at such times that we are permitted to behold the preacher as he spoke his message to his people.

Thus, while when measured by the standard of sheer homiletical force the judgment of posterity in favor of the superior excellence of the עו"א can be well sustained, as expressions of his peculiar pulpit technique and of his personal reactions to the conditions and practices prevalent in his day, however, others of his works, such as the או"ל and the ע"ש and to a limited extent even his עי"ג, must lay prior claim to our attention and careful study. For, as we have good reason to believe, it is in the above, rather than in his purely homiletical works, that the message of the preacher as actually given in the pulpit is best preserved. If in his published works so many of the sermons embrace little more than the homiletical framework, it is because he would rather be read in part than totally ignored.[32] Words of exhortation, he very early discovered, awakened an unfavorable response in many people. They despised the admonition of the preacher, and greeted his person with contumely. Novel and skilful interpretations alone, even when these did violence to the true meaning of the text, evoked sympathy and admiration. And so, preachers bent upon being popular, had long abandoned the practice of scanning and, when necessary, condemning the habits of the people, indulging instead in the vain art of

[32] עי"ג, הקדמה ראשונה.

juggling with texts. "But such a method of preaching goes counter to my very nature. It can never become my own."[33] Accordingly, to minister to the needs of all the people, as well as to save his labors from possible oblivion, he is willing to yield to the opponents of his method to this limited extent: he will divide the book in question into two parts, in the first of which homiletical discourses on the weekly lessons from the Pentateuch will be given, while in the other, ethical and spiritual truths in their application to daily conduct will be discussed.[34] It is quite apparent that no such dichotomy marked the sermons in their original state; and it is equally evident that only in such compositions of his as unite within themselves these two primary elements, the homily and the monition, we shall be sure to hear authentic echoes of the preacher's voice.

Indeed, if we choose to concentrate our attention on the homiletical discourses of Luntshitz, exclusively, as many seem to have done, we shall fail to comprehend the full nature of his powers, and thus be unable to evaluate all the elements of permanence in his contribution. For the key to his character as a preacher, as well as to the secret of his undoubted influence on the course of Jewish preaching in later centuries, will be found in his theory of preaching, as expounded by him on diverse occasions and as exemplified in those of his sermons in which his pulpit utterances seem to be most faithfully transcribed. "The sole aim in all my literary endeavors," he repeatedly protests, "whether in the written or spoken word, has always been to expose the godless men."[35] And Israel's leaders, he avers, have no more urgent duty to perform than, when speaking in public, to excoriate sin and rebuke the sinner.[36] There is little to be gained from the all-too-

[33] *Ibid.* [34] *Ibid.*; see also הקדמה to second part, p. 4d.
[35] ש"ד, הקדמה. [36] או"ל, דרוש לפסח, p. 24a.

common practice of toying with texts and often distorting them out of their original shape, unless it be to magnify the person of the preacher.[37] The homily is the mere framework of the picture; its elaboration is justified only if it helps to draw the attention of the audience to the picture itself. And in an age when homiletical ingenuity alone is admired in the preacher, and his honest message, directly and specifically applied, is spurned and despised by the multitude, it is naturally good pedagogy to blend the two into one palatable whole.[38] Common prudence also dictates that the preacher observe the proprieties whilst he performs his duty, that he do not, for example, single out any one individual in the congregation for special censure. The practised preacher will have no difficulty in so framing his strictures as to leave no doubt in the mind of the individual offender as to the real target of the attack, all the while the congregation at large is kept in the dark as to his identity.[39] Nor will the wise leader forever dwell on the shortcomings of the people. He will welcome every opportunity to speak words of approval; to commend them for their virtues as well as to condemn them for their vices. He will endeavor to see the good, as well as the evil, that is in men.[40] But, withal, he will never compromise with sin. He will neither ignore it nor condone it. Like the prophet of old, he will cry aloud, and spare not. He will declare unto his people their transgression, even if mockery and personal injury be his only guerdon.[41] For the leader, who is a true shepherd to his people, will carefully guide their steps in the path of duty, away from all those iniquities which, like beasts of prey, threaten to devour them.[42] He will

[37] *Ibid.*; עו"א, P. II, Ser. 31, p. 47b. [38] *Ibid.* p. 19b.
[39] כ"י, דברים, p. 90a, וילך, p. 112a; עי"נ, דברים, p. 1b.
[40] עי"נ, דברים, p. 1b.
[41] או"ל, דרוש לראש השנה, p. 11a.
[42] עי"נ, פנחס, p. 32b.

also strive to preserve peace and unity in the midst of the flock; and by what better means than by candid criticism and solemn admonition can true unity be achieved in Israel?[43]

But prophetic preaching, so urgently needed and so eminently worth while, is unfortunately beset by grave limitations. For one thing, the people in large numbers, intoxicated with a life of sense, forever pursuing honor, power, wealth, pleasure, will suffer no interruption in their mad revelry even though the house be on fire.[44] Moreover, they resent the attempt of the preacher to establish the truth that there is some vital connection between character and condition, between conduct and circumstance, and that Israel's redemption has been all too long delayed because of the evil-doers in our midst. They would rather not face such unwelcome facts. Besides, in their pride they actually deem themselves free from all faults and sins, in very truth paragons of virtue.[45] And so, they are bent on muzzling their leaders. The power of election is in their hands. They can always find men of more tractable disposition. They purposely elect their rabbi for a short term so that, dominated by the motive of fear, he may tamely submit to their wishes.[46] And should the courageous leader dare to expose the follies and offences of the people, ignoring their intimidations and successfully defying their evident power, he will soon discover that even though firmly entrenched in his position he has been worsted in the struggle none the less. For his opponents, numerous and unprincipled, will be sure to invent and rehearse scandalous stories most damaging to his character, stories which

[43] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 36, p. 56c.
[44] ש"ד, הקדמה.
[45] או"ל, דרוש לפסח, p. 19b.
[46] כ"י, הקדמה, שופטים, p. 104d; עי"נ, מקץ, p. 51a, אמור, p. 35b; עו"א, הקדמה.

once widely circulated must sooner or later neutralize the whole effect of his preaching.[47]

But there is another serious limitation to the prophetic method of preaching, one that is conditioned by the character and outlook of the preacher himself. In many instances, our preaching is ineffective because excessive timidity is perched in the pulpit. So many rabbis are unwilling to raise their voices in vehement protest against the iniquities of their time lest in so doing they jeopardize the chance of promotion to the more prominent positions of the land.[48] Others, not quite so ambitious in their designs, studiously refrain from combating the forces of evil lest they give offence and imperil their popularity with the people. They will rather protect their own honor than promote God's glory.[49] But what militates most against the effectiveness of our preaching is the melancholy fact that so many who assume the office of preacher are spiritually unfit for the task. The truths they preach do not well up from their own souls. They speak with the lips, but not from the heart. When they touch anything unclean it remains unholy, because the holy flesh they bear is only in the skirt of their garment.[50] The people soon learn to distrust the man who has no real conviction toward the truths he teaches. And not infrequently the very conduct of these so-called teachers belies their own preachment. They, for example, who are commissioned to propagate peace in all the manifold relations of life are often the very cause of whatever divisiveness there may exist in the community.[51] They who teach the virtue of humility and humbleness of spirit often deal arrogantly and contemptuously with those

[47] דרוש לר"ה, או"ל, p. 4a. [48] נשא, עי"נ, p. 5b.
[49] דרוש לפסח, או"ל, p. 23b; דברים, עי"נ, p. 1b.
[50] עמוד התורה, ע"ש, p. 3b.
[51] תרומה, עי"נ, p. 30a.

less distinguished in the mastery of the Torah.[52] They who have received the mandate: Ye shall fear no man! teach their lips to enunciate words of servile flattery.[53] However much, then, they may strive to inculcate, by word of mouth, a sense of duty and responsibility, unless they themselves are permeated by such a sense, unless their own lives yield an abundance of the fruit they would fain cultivate in others, of what avail are all their efforts?[54]

And many are the evils in the Jewish camp which the preacher earnestly devoted to his task will surely labor to remove. All communities present the same disheartening spectacle: the most meticulous observance of trifling regulations and the grossest neglect of the fundamental practices of the religious life.[55] Envy and hate; slander and deceit; neglect, or improper study, of the Torah; hypocrisy and avarice; vanity and lust and arrogance; prayerlessness and perjury; frivolity and falsehood,—these forever stare us in the face.[56] And the pitiful thing is that the people do not even seem to be aware of the flagrant character of these cardinal sins![57] We have yet to learn that anyone ever felt penitent and prayed for forgiveness because he had spoken ill of his neighbor.[58] Why, such ethical flaws are even viewed as laudable qualities, indispensable to success in life. In the eyes of the populace, insincerity and hypocrisy, for example, are the distinguishing marks of the experienced and the worldly-wise. The honest soul, free from flattery and deceit, is looked upon as a simpleton, totally lacking in experience and therefore unfit for any worthy cooperative endeavor.[59] And should one deplore the widespread distortion of the truth and ven-

[52] ע"ש, עמוד השלום, p. 20c. [53] עו"א, P. III, Ser. 13, p. 85d.
[54] ש"ד, ואתחנן, p. 146. [55] ויקרא, ש"ד, p. 6. [56] *Ibid.*
[57] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 34, p. 51b.
[58] או"ל, דרוש לר"ה, p. 13a.
[59] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 34, p. 53d; ע"ש, אמת, p. 18b.

ture to condemn publicly the vicious habits of the false and the faithless whose vile deceptions are not restricted to the social sphere but extend into the field of trade and commerce, he is politely reminded that these are the ways of the world and that it is foolish, because futile, to protest.[60] Thus, the floodgates of sycophancy and slander are left wide open, threatening to engulf the upright and the pious whose humility and innate modesty hold in check even the very instinct for self-defence.[61] Of course, the motive for this unrestrained defamation of other lives is not far to seek. Evil-speaking ministers to self-pride. It is difficult to raise absolutely one's mental and moral stature. But it is easy to raise it relatively, that is, by reducing the stature of other people alongside of whom one stands, thus giving the appearance of self-elevation.[62] But whatever the motive, the result is deplorable. By overlooking such vicious practices as natural or condoning them as venial, we put a premium on false pretence and malicious detraction. Men unworthy of honor and trust thus often rise to positions of power and influence, while those of spotless character, who will not stoop to dissimulation and deceit, are condemned to lives of obscurity and ineffectiveness.[63]

[60] ע"ש, אמת, p. 18a.

[61] עי"ג, מצורע, p. 21; עו"א, P. III, Ser. 2, p. 67d.—He cites the specific case of a prominent family upon whose members the stigma of bastardy had been placed by the scandal-mongers of the community, against which infamous fabrication only his teacher Solomon Luria dared to raise his voice.—ים של שלמה, בבא קמא, chap. 8, p. 115b, Prague, 1616. See Gruenwald, p. 15, note 10.

[62] ש"ד, מצורע, p. 14.

[63] ע"ש, עמוד התורה, p. 5a.—In this connection, it may be of interest also to refer to the severe condemnation he levels at the common practice of appointing Dayanim not solely because of their special fitness for this responsible position but largely because they happen to be related to influential members of the community. Often the men so selected lack the moral character and the judicial temper of the true judge in Israel. In fact, they view the office not as an opportunity for joyful service but rather, under the prevailing fee-

But in addition to a lamentable lack of appreciation of the finer qualities of character, there is a hopeless confusion as to the value of life itself. Most men live as though they believed that life existed for things. Thus life is lived on a low plane. Those of our members who constitute the backbone of our congregations, are mostly merchants who are deeply engrossed in the business of gathering profits, and whose standard of value, even in matters pertaining to holy things, is none other than the coin of the realm.[64] Under such circumstances, it is quite inevitable that the well-to-do, eager to impress their neighbors with their power and importance, should endeavor to live on a scale unjustified even by their abundant means. They will don costly garments and make their abodes amid sumptuous surroundings, thus inflaming the envy of the non-Jew and imperilling the very security of their people.[65] Those in moderate circumstances, hankering after the luxuries of life, are perpetually scrambling for ever-increasing riches, an enterprise deservedly reputed to be the most fertile single source of evil in the world.[66] For aside from the fact that this ceaseless race for wordly possessions, enlisting participants of unequal equipment and endurance, results inevitably in the concentration of too much wealth in the hands of the few, an evil much to be deplored,[67] and aside from the further fact that in the process of accumulation men often forget to exercise the principle of justice in the conduct of their business affairs,[68] or engage in such lucrative enterprises as money-lending which while legitimate as a business cannot but prove injurious to one's re-

system, as a source of personal profit, for the possession of which even the rich are eager to bid high.—ע"ש, p. 16b; כ"י, שופטים, p. 104c.

[64] או"ל, הקדמה, p. 2b. [65] כ"י, דברים, p. 2b.

[66] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 6, p. 18c, Ser. 36, p. 56b.

[67] *Ibid.* Ser. 6, p. 18d.

[68] כ"י, דברים, p. 107a.

ligious outlook,[69] there is this gravest of all evils to be envisaged: that the ceaseless struggle for the possession of the superfluities of material existence, in which life itself is made subordinate to the acquisition of things, must eventually degrade and debauch the human soul, transforming free men into abject slaves.[70]

Of course, the possession of some of this world's goods is imperative and essential. Money is necessary and useful. But one must learn to hold it at a safe distance. It is comparable, in this respect, to fire: one can barely do without it, yet one does well not to get too close to it.[71] And surely there is no rational justification for this mad pursuit after the material things of the world, a pursuit that absorbs the interest and energy of multitudes of our people. The contention that the surplus of the rich ministers to the needs of the poor can hardly be sustained by the actual facts of experience. The rich never give as much as they should.[72] In most instances they are too close-fisted to heed the cry of the poor; and when they do respond to some pitiful appeal they invariably advertise their generosity, thus revealing the true motive of their beneficence.[73] Yet they will squander fortunes on gifts to men in power, because power is something they appreciate and truly hunger for.[74] What they give to the poor is often only what they cannot use for themselves—a few odd dishes and cups, cast-off things no longer serviceable.[75] Some of them, about to answer the call of death, yield to the monition of im-

[69] עו״א, P. II, Ser. 24, p. 37a.—Luntshitz advances here the novel thought that while to derive one's income, to the extent of one's actual needs, from interest on secured loans is quite permissible, it may none the less be attended by serious diminution in one's faith in God, inasmuch as the dealer in such loans, confidently relying on the value of the collateral deposited, is apt to leave God out of the reckoning altogether.

[70] דרוש לפסח, או״ל, p. 27a. [71] עו״א, P. II, Ser. 8, p. 21d.

[72] ע״ש, p. 13a. [73] הקדמה, או״ל, p. 2b.

[74] קרח, ע״ג, p. 22a. [75] ע״ש, p. 12b.

pending gloom and bequeath to charity some of their hoarded treasures; but to surrender to others what one can no longer enjoy oneself is more an act of despair than of conscience.[76] The customary defence of the avarice of the rich, that it springs from a natural and laudable solicitude for the welfare of their progeny, would be quite amusing if it were not so shameful.[77]

The simple fact is that we are interested only in the things of immediate benefit to us, money, honor, power, forgetting that in all such matters the victorious are always the vanquished.[78] It may be true, of course, that conditions of life in the diaspora are in no small measure responsible for the want of spirituality in our character and outlook,[79] but there can be no gainsaying the truth that as long as the passion for wealth and luxury and pleasure dominates our lives, as long as pride and jealousy and strife divide our ranks, the redemption of Israel must be indefinitely delayed.[80]

How, then, shall we bring about the spiritual regeneration of our people? How shall we make religion a reality in their lives? Surely, Judaism in its essential elements is equal to the task. For what is the essence of Judaism, the foundation of our faith? Is it not love of God and love of man inextricably intertwined? And if men rush from mart to mart to store up more of this world's goods than they can possibly use, if they neglect the things of the spirit and have no love for their brother in their hearts, is it not because we have failed to stress the cardinal principles of our faith?[81] Israel's Torah may well be likened to a fruit-bearing tree. There are the roots, the trunk and the branches; and there are the leaves and the fruit. The former are the permanent parts of the tree; the

[76] עי"ג, פתיחה שניה, p. 25b. [77] כ"י, חצא, p. 107a.
[78] ע"ש, p. 6a. [79] או"ל, דרוש לפסח, p. 29b.
[80] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 7, p. 21b; כ"י, בחקותי, p. 79a. [81] או"ל, הקדמה, p. 3b.

latter change from year to year. Similarly, the traditional rules and reasons and interpretations are time-conditioned and subject to change; while the Torah itself, the tree of life, is eternal, flourishing in undiminished vitality as when first planted on Sinai's height.[82] Now, in this our permanent possession we discover two distinct classes of principles and practices: those that aim to safeguard the physical well-being of the individual and strengthen the material basis and structure of society, and those whose value for our terrestrial existence may not be clear but whose constant and subtle influence on our spiritual nature is quite unmistakable.[83] But in either of these groups of fundamental laws of conduct, the central figure, so to speak, the focus toward which they all converge, is God.[84] All the numerous injunctions in the Torah have but one end in view: to bring us to a clearer and fuller realization of God's presence in the world.[85] We are indeed fortunate in that we do not have to depend on our reason, never wholly exempt from error, for the evidences of God's existence and power.[86] The Torah provides us with a faithful record of God's operations in the universe and in the life of man. We are equally fortunate in that, by means of the Torah, we can direct our steps towards God's dwelling-place without having to abandon the necessary occupations and interests of physical life.[87] For in Judaism the patently secular, when sanctified by a spirit of devotion to God, becomes unalterably sacred. The ordinary details of physical life need but be sublimated by a higher purpose to become vested with spiritual significance. Let a man feed his body prompted by the consciousness that only thus can he acquire the strength wherewith to do God's work in the world, and the purely animal act rises

[82] עי׳ג, תרומה, p. 30a. [83] *Ibid.* עקב, p. 9a.
[84] עו׳א, P. II, Ser. 31, p. 47a. [85] *Ibid.* P. III, Ser. 13, p. 90a.
[86] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 40, p. 59a. [87] *Ibid.* P. III, Ser. 21, p. 99d.

to the level of the holy.[88] Herein, in fact, lies the main difference between the materialist and the spiritually-minded: the former never gets beyond the deed done, while the latter in all he does never loses sight of the ultimate purpose of which the bare deed is both the natural antecedent and the sure promise.[89] The material preoccupations of man, like dewdrops glistening in the grass, rise heavenward when the sun of a higher purpose pours its rays upon them.[90] Hence, only what is of intrinsic worth and capable of spiritualization should experience unfailing growth, steady increase, constant ascent, while things of inferior quality and promise should be held immobile, circumscribed, limited in size and in appeal.[91] And it is by holding in check impulses and cravings unrelated and unhelpful to the progress of the soul, or, better still, by harnessing the forces of our physical nature to the tasks and purposes of the spirit, that we can hope to see developed in us such moral sensitiveness, such spiritual insight, as will enable us to apprehend and approach the Divine.[92] Thus, we need but fix our attention on the high spiritual teachings of the moulders of our faith to realize the imperative duty of turning away from the seductive pleasures, the degrading pursuits and practices, of the unhallowed life.[93]

An intelligent understanding of the Torah alone, a clear comprehension of its vital principles, could rescue this generation from the many evils that corrode its inner life. But, and here is the rub, ours is a generation that has no real love for Torah.[94] The acquisitive instinct is too strong with us. It

[88] *Ibid.* [89] *Ibid.* P. III, Ser. 13, p. 93b.

[90] או"ל דרוש לר"ה, p. 13b. [91] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 27, p. 41d.

[92] או"ל דרוש לר"ה, p. 8a; כ"י, בא, p. 41c.

[93] עי"ג, פתיחות ושערים, p. 3b.—שאו מרום עיניכם אל היודעים ואל האבות ואל תדרשו אל הידעונים ואל האובות.

[94] או"ל דרוש לר"ה, p. 4a.

crowds out all other interests from our hearts.[95] The rich, whose creature-comforts and abundant leisure should form the most favorable conditions for a life of study, seem unable to shake themselves free of this their master passion, a passion that knows no limits and recognizes no superior.[96] And those who are steadily engaged in the study of Torah, are more often impelled thereto by some selfish motive such as love of honor and of power. Some even regard it as a desirable means of livelihood. Few bring to it a devotion that is pure and deep.[97] Hence, their very bearing in the community is one that accords but ill with the nature and dignity of their vocation. They insist on exacting all the honor due them as custodians of the law, concealing their egregious vanity behind the feeble allegation that only thus could they compel respect for the Torah itself.[98] They forget, though, that the heights of learning, even as those of piety, can be scaled only by those who follow the path of humility.[99] And it is this, their utter lack of humility, their false pride and vanity, that vitiates their very learning. Thirsting not for knowledge but for admiration, they spend their time in futile discussions of ingenious and far-fetched interpretations of the law, in the hope that their sheer cleverness will win for them the plaudits of the less expert dialecticians.[100] Thus, hair-splitting is mistaken for brilliant scholarship, and the words of the living God are hurled into the dark abyss of primeval chaos.[101] And the use of these reprehensible methods of study has become so widespread, so strongly entrenched in the schools, that few busy themselves with the primary sources, the Bible and the Mishnah, and fewer still, even of those who admit the futility and viciousness of the entire pursuit, show any inclination to

[95] עו"א, P. I, Ser. 1, p. 4c. [96] ע"ש, עמוד התורה, p. 1c.
[97] או"ל, p. 1a. [98] ע"ש, p. 5a. [99] *Ibid.* p. 6a.
[100] או"ל, הקדמה, p. 2b, דרוש לפסח, p. 28a. [101] *Ibid.* p. 27a.

abandon a practice so prevalent and in such great popular favor.[102]

It is quite evident that our whole educational system beginning with the elementary schools, must undergo a complete transformation if the ideals of the spirit enshrined in the Torah are ever to control and direct our daily conduct. Men of true learning will not rest content with their own rich acquisitions. They will endeavor to diffuse the light of the Torah among those dwelling in darkness.[103] And naturally they will begin with the very young whose minds are plastic and retentive, and who are as amenable to words of truth and reason as they are susceptible to influences of evil.[104] This natural receptivity of youth they will exploit in such a way as will not only strengthen the newly-awakened mental faculties of the child but will also implant in his soul a keen appreciation of, and a permanent attachment to, the essential principles of right-living. With this latter end in view, they will strive to impart to the child a thorough knowledge of the Pentateuch, from the beginning to the end, and not merely a few verses from each weekly portion; stressing in their instruction the ethical and spiritual significance of each passage read and not solely the linguistic medium.[105] It is surely more important that the child should learn to revere God and the laws of God than that he should know the meaning of many words. When the young pupil has mastered the Pentateuch, his attention should be directed to the Mishnah, that is, to those parts of it which treat of subjects pertaining to the conduct of everyday life. If possessed of exceptional ability, he may then be allowed to proceed to the study of the Talmud. The average boy, however, will do well to continue with the

[102] *Ibid.* [103] עו"א, P. III, Ser. 8, p. 74c.
[104] ש"ד, מצורע, p. 29.
[105] ע"ש, p. 23a; ש"ד, בחקותי, p. 58.

further study of the Bible, all the while he is being grounded in the ethical life and in the ways of true piety.[106]

A radical revision in the prevailing methods of teaching, then, is the most urgent need of our time, which Israel's leaders cannot afford to ignore.[107] If our children are unruly, boisterous, ill-mannered, disrespectful, and rebellious, it is because they have been trained by "hirelings" who are more interested in the emolument received than in the instruction given.[108] "In our generation, the 'Pillar of the Torah' is well-nigh tottering. Our whole system of education, whether we view it in relation to the instruction designed for children or to that for adults, is deplorably defective. As regards the education of the young, at a very early age the child is placed in the custody of a professional teacher who, by way of grounding him in the Scriptures, reads with him a few verses from the weekly portion of the Pentateuch, dwelling on the signification of the words or sentences read without attempting to indicate their significance in the thought-content of the whole. Even when a complete section is studied, the logical sequence of its ideas remains untraced. And after this preliminary training the child is speedily initiated into the study of the Mishnah or the Talmud, even though he has not as yet been made to know either the nature of God or the requirements of His law. With no knowledge of what it means to love God, to fear God, to hearken to the voice of God, of what benefit could the study of the Mishnah or Talmud be to him? His scant familiarity with the Pentateuch soon fades from his memory. Indeed, since the Pentateuchal lesson taught him had more to do with language than with content, the meaning of some Hebrew words was all he could retain. To be frank, one is quite puzzled to know why the Pentateuch should be studied at all, if the chief objective is a

[106] *Ibid.* [107] *Ibid.* p. 23d. [108] *Ibid.*

knowledge of the Hebrew language? Why, in the study of foreign languages, one would not think of using such a textbook as the Pentateuch! Surely, we do not mean to confound the study of the rudiments of Hebrew with Torah!

"And when the child is thus prematurely ushered into the study of the Talmud, what are the tractates laid before him? Why, mostly those that have no bearing on his daily life, such as Erubin and Ḥulin! From the study of such tractates, the child carries away no lasting impression, be it that of a religious or an ethical character, having nothing to show for his pains but a bare familiarity with the literary style of the Talmud. Of course, parental pride thrives on this method, as it enables a father to exhibit the mental prowess of his budding son. One so tender in years and yet robust enough to wrestle with a difficult legal question! Yea, subtle enough to observe veiled distinctions and invent inconceivable analogies! And when this pupil grows older and has the good fortune to join a school of higher learning, what studies absorb his interest and energy there? Why, none other than those which deal with the ingenious but worthless discussions of an unsound dialectic! It is amazing that a mature mind presiding over such a school should deliberately distort the accepted interpretation of a talmudic passage without even discerning the gross self-deception involved in the process! Does this form of intellectual gymnastics, so wasteful of valuable time and productive of nothing more than self-glorification, conform to what we know to be the will of God?"[109]

But there is another and perhaps more effective means of overcoming the spiritual inertia and deadness of an external conformity. To be sure, a knowledge of the essence of Judaism, a clear comprehension of the true inwardness of our religious beliefs and practices, will tend to direct the flow of

[109] ע"ש, עמוד התורה, p. 6d.

our energies into channels of pure and exalted living. Yet nothing is so well adapted to elevate and refine the human spirit, even as nothing so completely engages and sanctifies the physical senses, as the ready submission to the will of God in public prayer.[110] It is for this reason that we designate worship as one of the pillars that uphold the world. And, indeed, prayer properly conceived, is the most potent spiritual exercise open to man. For while in our liturgy the entreaty for material blessings is as frequent as that for spiritual enrichment, the underlying sense of all our prayers is that not our will but God's will be done.[111] Besides, the enlightened worshipper never fails to distinguish between the prayers of aspiration which are essential and the prayers of petition which are only of secondary importance.[112]

But, and this must never be lost sight of, the efficacy of our prayers, whatever be their tenor, and the impetus divine worship gives to more intense spiritual activity, are conditioned by *kawana*, the complete concentration of the interests and powers of the worshipper on the act of devotion. When this, for one reason or another, is absent, prayer ceases to have any spiritual significance; it degenerates into the vain and meaningless chirpings of the bird.[113] And it is just here where the synagogue as a house of prayer reveals its pathetic impotence. Divine worship as conducted in our synagogues fails to bear any fruitful spiritual results, because it is a worship little calculated to create and sustain the prayerful mood. Aside from the fact that the majority of the worshippers, insofar as they come to the synagogue either unequipped with a knowledge of the Hebrew language or so engrossed in other thoughts that the spirit of devotion never takes full possession

[110] עו"א, P. IV, Ser. 2, p. 103; ע"ש, עבודה, p. 7a.
[111] כ"י, ואתחנן, p. 98d.
[112] עו"א, P. IV, Ser. 2, p. 103d. [113] ע"ש, עבודה, p. 8a.

of their minds, are altogether unprepared for the task in hand,[114] the service itself is beset by so many disorders and distractions as to make concentrated devotion extremely difficult, if at all possible. That pernicious habit, countenanced in most synagogues, of punctuating the prayers with random conversation and heated discussions of a personal character, turns the Lord's house into a disreputable resort.[115] The gross indecorum that attends our synagogal worship has indeed made us the laughing-stock of the non-Jewish world.[116] What with the ceaseless babble humming on all sides, what with the din of cantankerous disputes rising above the medley of voices intoning the set prayers, and what with the habitual intrusion of the irrelevant announcements of the marketplace into the very heart of the service, public worship as practiced in the synagogue is as little inspirational as the worshippers are reverential.[117] Prayer has thus become with us a matter of routine, the mere utterance of words that do not well up from the heart.[118] In fact, few of the so-called worshippers have even the patience to tarry in the synagogue all through the service. At a convenient pause, such as is afforded by the reading of the scriptural lesson, they make their hasty departure to parade through the streets of the city.[119] And of those who remain, some chant the prayers with so much ostentation and pride, often anticipating the familiar intonations of the cantor so as to attract attention to themselves, that their praying can hold little spiritual significance for them.[120] Of course, in this their ostentatious display, they are only following the example set for them by the "messenger of the congregation" himself, the cantor who blares his trumpeting voice for the sake of making a good impression

[114] *Ibid.* 9a. [115] עו"א, P. IV, Ser. 2, p. 103d.
[116] ע"ש, עבודה, p. 8c. [117] *Ibid.* [118] או"ל דרוש לר"ה, p. 16b.
[119] ע"ש, עבודה, p. 8a. [120] עו"א, P. IV, Ser. 2, p. 103c.

and receiving a more handsome reward for the effort, altogether heedless of the meaning of the words he chants and unconcerned about the proper emotional state of the true worshipper.[121]

"Since in our time the service of the heart, prayer, has taken the place of the service of the altar, sacrifice, the large bulk of the people, ignorant of the Hebrew language, can do no more than utter unintelligible sounds, chirp and mutter like birds. Can this be what we mean by the service of the heart? . . . This state of affairs, of course, rises out of the fact that in their childhood they were trained to translate solitary words of the Bible without ever learning to group these words into a unified thought. Had they been taught to render biblical verses intelligently they no doubt would have mastered the language in which our liturgy is couched. It should be added, however, that to the great mass of the people, even to those unhampered by linguistic difficulties, devotion in prayer is quite unknown. Their minds are forever fixed on their business affairs even during the hour of prayer. So engrossed are they in worldly matters that they cannot muster enough will-power to shake themselves free of the obsession even for the brief period of worship. Besides, some indulge in vain reveries, and others even busy themselves with all sorts of evil thoughts while thus engaged in prayer. Can this be what we mean by the service of the heart, when a man's mind is flitting through the market-place all the while his body is stationed in the synagogue? . . . I therefore vehemently protest against the utter lack of the spirit of devotion in our public worship, whether it reveal itself in the meaningless chatter in which the people so freely engage, with no thought of the reverence due to the Lord of all, or whether it become manifest in the sundry secular announce-

[121] אור"ל, הקדמה, p. 2b; ע"ש, עבודה, pp. 8a, 9a.

ments, especially those pertaining to the sale of articles of food, by which the service of the synagogue is regularly interrupted . . . Above all, I raise my voice in protest against that nefarious practice of calling a halt to the service until some factional dispute is settled or some personal grievance is redressed. Who can adequately characterize such an abomination? The irony of it all! The praise of God must be suspended, that the claim of some plaintiff may be satisfied! Has the house of God become a den of robbers, filled as it is with the raucous outcries of contending factions? We stand disgraced in the eyes of our non-Jewish neighbors, who frequent our houses of worship and, when made to witness such atrocious scenes, discredit our worship and denounce our ways of living! Can we conceive of any greater profanation of God's name? . . .

"I also protest against the insertion of too many *piyuṭim* in our liturgy. Most of these *piyuṭim* are woven around some *midrash*, which to one unfamiliar with the midrashic references, convey little sense. Even to those well versed in the sources, many of these *piyuṭim* prove unedifying because they are lacking in the elements of true devotion, being chiefly recitals of past occurrences.

"I also protest against the cantors who chant the prayers with excessive elaboration, knowing full well that while so engaged they cannot concentrate on the thought of the prayers. In fact, many of them think of nothing else but the good impression they are bent on making, and the plaudits of the crowds they are anxious to win. Needless to say that the prayers chanted by the choristers are altogether senseless and savorless to the Lord . . .

"I have also observed that on the Sabbath and the Festivals, while the scriptural lesson is being read in the synagogue, hosts of people are leisurely strolling through the city

streets, as if they had no portion in God's law. Such things should surely be condemned. There also ought to be instituted in every congregation the regular preaching of sermons on the Sabbath day. These sermons should deal with themes of ethical and ritual import, similar to those preached in former times, and not with *midrashic* exegesis from which the people can derive no special benefit. Who knows but that by such means those who have been lulled to sleep by the enticing present as well as those who have been lured by the pleasures of the moment, heedless of all consequences, may be sufficiently stirred to such action as will preserve the synagogue in its holiness, making it once again an abode fit for prayer?"[122]

It is only in this way, by perfecting the methods of our religious instruction and by purifying and elevating the spirit of our public worship, that we can hope to attain unto greater spirituality. For the perfection of man, the opinion of Maimonides to the contrary notwithstanding, is the chief aim of all existence,[123] and the supreme end of man's endeavors in life must ever be to cleave unto God by living in harmony with His will.[124] Conscious of this our great task and high destiny, we shall eschew from our lives all extraneous motives and interests and focus our entire energy on the single pursuit prescribed for us.[125] Of course, we shall frequently stumble and fall, but through sincere repentance we shall rise up again and continue the onward march. For every man, though subject to repeated backsliding, becomes, when truly repentant, a veritable Moses, mounting the Sinai of his spirit, the height where dwells the eternal God.[126]

[122] ע"ש, pp. 23c–24d.
[123] עו"א, P. III, Ser. 1, p. 66c.
[124] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 2, p. 12b.
[125] או"ל, p. 8a.
[126] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 30, p. 45a.

4

Structurally, the homiletical works of Ephraim Luntshitz fall into two classes: those that comprise finished compositions, complete in form and treatment, and those that contain only the exegetic material used, fragmentary or more elaborate homilies which the preacher presumably preserved as the groundwork of more extensive discourses. To the former group belong the עו"א, the או"ל, and the ע"ש; to the latter, the עי"נ (first part), the כ"י, and the ש"ד. In either class, the originality of the author's technique is readily discernible. To be sure, the main features of his particular style of homiletical exegesis, in so far as these partake of the qualities peculiar to all forms of rabbinic interpretation, point to no novel or striking departure from the familiar ways of Jewish preaching. Yet, it is in the skilful employment of the well-known and widely used methods, that Luntshitz reveals the power and resourcefulness of an original mind. Likewise, in the field of presentation, with its diverse ways of elucidation and delineation, though others before him made equally good use of the same media, Luntshitz achieves pictorial effects of singular charm and impressiveness. And, surely, in the framework of his more elaborate sermons, which, though patterned after no recognized literary models, yet preserves a clearness of outline and an orderly arrangement of ideas attained only by compositions of the standard type, he evinces a sure instinct for expert craftsmanship in the field of literary creation.

Unlike the Italian preachers of his day, who took lessons from the old masters in the art of construction, Luntshitz, to whom the Ciceronian principles of composition were unknown and foreign literary patterns inaccessible, had to devise an acceptable outline, a sermonic scaffolding, of his own. This he did and followed so faithfully and with such regu-

larity, that the modern reader cannot but weary at times of the unrelieved monotony of an execution so uniform. Yet, in view of the absolute clarity of thought and the extreme brevity of expression he achieved by the constant use of this method, what critic would presume to find serious fault with a form fruitful of such substantial results?

In his best known collection of sermons, the עו"א, Luntshitz rarely, if ever, deviates from the framework of his own creation. Though the aim of his preaching, as he so often insists, is essentially that of the prophet, to declare to his people their transgression and to make known to them the paths of everlasting life,[127] his method is largely that of the rabbinic interpreter. The text, or texts, both biblical and rabbinical, with which the sermon opens, must be thoroughly elucidated. This necessary undertaking demands, it would seem, that some fundamental truth be posited which, when proved by reason and supported by authority, will disclose the inner meaning, the spiritual implications of the text. It is not that the tangled textual difficulties must be unraveled before the thought of the text can be made simple and clear. The text as it stands is transparent enough. It need puzzle no one. But it hints at great depths below its unruffled surface. It invites careful exploration. It promises unexpected revelations. Accordingly, the citation of the text is immediately followed by the proposition, the truth the preacher would posit and prove, designated in the sermon as הצעה,[128] or הנחה,[129] and couched generally in conditional form, that is to say, if the proposition the preacher is forthwith to establish be accepted as true, the profounder meaning of the text together with its rational basis must become evident to all. The task of the preacher is thus definitely fixed at the very outset. He must endeavor to

[127] או"ל, הקדמה; ע"ש, הקדמה; עו"א, הקדמה.
[128] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 28, p. 43c. [129] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 6, p. 9d.

supply a valid reason, logical and authoritative, for the truth of a categorical statement which, when applied to the interpretation of a given text, will render its meaning more luminous and significant.

This method of approach is strikingly original and, as employed by Luntshitz, very effective, though it does suggest a reversal in the process of our thinking. For, ordinarily we sense the possibilities of a text before we are ready to formulate a general proposition to be deduced from it. We first interpret and then gather up the results. And Luntshitz himself, it may be safely assumed, arrived at his conclusions by no other mental process, even though in the matter of presentation he chooses to attack the proposition independently, keeping the source in the background until the main stream of his thought is completely traced. Naturally, this method of procedure, dispensing with all the usual preliminaries such as the setting of the text or the origin of the question, enables the preacher to be brief in treatment. Also, since the elucidation of the text is deliberately delayed until the proposition is fully unfolded, it introduces the element of suspense and thus heightens the interest of the reader. But what the sermon gains by this method in compactness and piquancy, it appears to lose, as a public address, in naturalness, flexibility, and vivacity. In fact, these shortcomings must have become quite apparent to Luntshitz, for in his later productions such as the אור״ל and the ע״ש, we find him earnestly at work to modify his earlier style of construction, to give it greater simplicity and spontaneity, although this also resulted in making the sermon more prolix.[130]

But not in structure alone, in his methods of exposition as well, does Luntshitz reveal the independence and originality

[130] See אור״ל, דרוש לר״ה, p. 4a, דרוש לפסח, p. 19b; ע״ש, Ser. 5, p. 5a, Ser. 13, p. 12d.

of his homiletical powers. To be sure, animated as he was by the sole desire to instil into his people a deeper understanding and appreciation of the great mandates of the religious life, he spurned no method of instruction and edification which our earlier preachers deemed worthy and found helpful. And, surely, in a rich and extensive homiletical literature like ours, there is hardly a method known to the preacher's art but that finds therein abundant illustrations of its uses. Yet, while employing all the various vehicles and modes of expression made familiar by a long line of predecessors in the field, Luntshitz proved himself no servile imitator. He learned the way, but in following it he clearly evinced the power and fertility of an original mind. Whether he used textual or illustrative material, whether he summoned to his aid the skill of the interpreter or the pictorial effects of the imagination, it was always the freshness of the conception and the adroitness of the execution that lent uniqueness to his work and easily proclaimed him the master.

Sharing the characteristic common to all the medieval Jewish preachers, to use biblical and rabbinical texts, other than those around which the proposition revolves, as illustrative material, not merely to buttress an idea advanced with the sanction of authority but also, and perhaps chiefly, to throw additional light upon it, to make it more lustrous and appealing, Luntshitz marshals in his sermons a large array of scriptural verses and agadic statements; and it is through the aptness of his citations and the luminousness of his interpretations that he achieves some of his most impressive homiletical effects. The thought, for example, that the sense of the sacred will put us on our guard against the slightest infraction of the moral law, the merest peccadillo, is strengthened and vivified by the divine command to Moses: "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou

standest is holy ground."[131] Shoes, among other things, render this most necessary service: they enable us to walk the streets freely, unconcerned about the presence of small objects, like pebbles, in the path of our march. When barefoot, we naturally look out for the tiniest obstacle in our way. The holy calls for personal vigilance, the steady consciousness of insecurity.[132] We often hear it said that sin is natural to man because of his lowly, his earthly, origin. Would that man might retain all through life his earthly nature! Does not the Psalmist declare that "truth springeth out of the earth?"[133] Truth can best be learned from the earth. For what is falsehood if not a deviation from the truth? But nature is constant in its orderliness, never transgressing its eternal laws.[134]

The evil of material possessions lurks in the possibility that they will eventually gain dominion over our souls, that they will come to possess us instead of being possessed by us. But the true man is he who masters his wealth and is not mastered by it. Is it not said of Abraham's trusted servant המושל בכל אשר לו, that he ruled over all that he had,[135] and that because of this quality in his character Abraham reposed unbounded confidence in him?[136] One's proficiency in the Torah, when not directed to flow into the channels of daily conduct, far from crowning him with honor, actually clothes him in disgrace. His knowledge only serves to set in high relief his life of disobedience. Solomon spoke truly when he said: "As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman that turneth away from discretion."[137] The uncleanliness of the swine is proverbial. Nor are indiscreet women uncommon. Yet, in both of these instances, if the filthiness of the swine attracts attention it is solely because of the presence of the gold ring

[131] Ex. 3,5. [132] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 56, p. 56c. [133] Ps. 85,12.
[134] אמת, ע"ש, p. 17c. [135] Gen. 24,2.
[136] בראשית, כ"י, p. 14d. [137] Prov. 11,22.

in its snout, and if the unseemly behavior of the fair woman evokes our interest it is chiefly because of the beauty that invests her person.[138] The touchstone of a man's profession of faith in the reality of the ideals of the spirit is the readiness to act with indifference to the supposed unrealities of life. Yet many people who seem wedded to a belief in the world to come are loth to surrender any of the pleasures of this world, at the call of duty. The genuineness of their affirmation fails the crucial test. In the Psalmist, though, we meet a man who stood the test, whose conduct testified to the strength of his conviction. For he boldly proclaims: האמנתי כי אדבר אני עניתי מאוד[139]—I actually believe what my lips profess, for I have endured much privation and affliction in the world.[140]

The hankering after the superfluities, instead of being content with the simpler pleasures, is not, as some would have us believe, the natural accompaniment of a higher civilization, the indubitable sign of man's preëminence in the scale of existence. ומותר האדם מן הבהמה אין[141]—man's craving for luxury arises from the animal portion of his nature and is of no worth. To rejoice in the simple life is to grow to the full stature of a man.[142] In fact, those who crowd their hearts with a plethora of wants leave no room in their lives for the refining influences of the Torah, for לא נתנה תורה לדרוש אלא לאוכלי המן[143] —the Torah can be properly studied only by those who, like the recipients of the Manna, gather their provisions from day to day.[144] No man, not even the humblest, need feel diffident in the performance of his appointed task in the world. It was because of his great humility that Moses felt reluctant at first to become the channel of divine revelation to his people. But

[138] ש"ד, במדבר, p. 68. [139] Ps. 116,10.
[140] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 28, p. 42d. [141] Eccl. 3,19.
[142] עי"נ, שער המדות, p. 70a.
[143] בשלח, מכילתא.
[144] או"ל, דרוש לפסח, p. 27a.

he soon conquered his disinclination and timidity when he learned that it was on Sinai, the smallest of mountains, that God's law would be revealed. Hence the significance of the rabbinic statement: משה קבל תורה מסיני—Moses acquiesced in the proposed plan that he, a most humble man, become the recipient of divine truth only when it had been given him to see, מסיני, by drawing a parallel lesson from Sinai, that God always chooses the lowly as the most worthy of His trust and favor.[145]

True to his repeated declaration of principle that only ideas and ideals and not the skilful manipulation of texts should engage the interest of the preacher, Luntshitz always treats his textual material as subsidiary to his thought, necessary and helpful, but of secondary importance. This source-material, however, so indispensable to the authoritativeness and impressiveness of the sermon, should be used with homiletical freedom though without extravagance. The פשט, the simple and evident meaning of the text, is not the only one to be considered by the preacher. A deeper signification, suggestive of subtler and more far-reaching implications, is often woven into its texture, and it is for the preacher to search for it diligently. The principle to guide him in his exegesis is best expressed by the Psalmist when he says: אחת דבר אלהים שתים זו שמעתי[146]—"God has spoken once, twice have I heard this." There is inherent in God's word another, besides its literal, meaning which will be disclosed only to those who labor to find it.[147] Of course, the two meanings are not identical and should never be made interchangeable; they must be kept separate and distinct. The רמז can never take the place of the פשט, but for homiletical purposes the one as the other can

[145] עי"נ, ויקרא, p. 3b; עו"א, P. II, Ser. 15, p. 29a.
[146] Ps. 62,12.
[147] עו"א, P. II, Ser. 3, p. 15a; עי"נ, פתיחה שניה, p. 31b.

be advantageously used.[148] The scriptural verse, for example, על כן יעזב איש את אביו ואת אמו ודבק באשתו[149]—"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife," leaves no room for doubt as to its real intention. Yet the additional thought that in choosing a wife a man shall stress, not her heredity and social environment, the habitat of father and mother, but her own personal virtues and accomplishments, cleaving solely to her own person, letting the quality of the tree testify to the nature of the soil, may appropriately be deduced from it without in the least altering thereby its primary meaning.[150] Similarly, when symbolical interpretations are resorted to for the elucidation and enforcement of a lesson of moment, it is not the wish of the interpreter to supplant the original meaning of the passage used but rather to indicate that על דרך המדרש, employing a recognized method of homiletical exegesis, we may add color and force to the idea in question. Thus, the thought that the repentant sinner, in rededicating himself to the good life, must adopt a stricter discipline than that of one who has never swerved from the path of duty, will gain confirmation and distinctness from the biblical injunction: כי תבנה בית חדש ועשית מעקה לגגך[151]—"When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a parapet for thy roof." Man, in his physical aspects, is often referred to as a "house." So, too, is the social structure of our group life. When a man sins, he damages either his own house or that of society. When he repents, it is as if he refashions the house, builds a "new house." Now, the

[148] כ"י, תרומה, p. 54d, בהר, p. 77c, בהעלותך, p. 85a, קרח, p. 87d.—Yet, while attaching great importance to the hidden and more profound meaning to be discovered in scriptural verses, he is loth to ascribe any value to the mystical interpretations of the Kabbalists, which he resolutely bans from his sermons.—עו"א, P. II, Ser. 13, p. 27a.

[149] Gen. 2,24.

[150] עו"א, P. III, Ser. 2, p. 68a.

[151] Deut. 22,8.

roof of this new house must be exceedingly well protected, a parapet should rise up on the very edge of it, lest its occupant slip once again and fall a prey to the evil passions of the blood.[152] Thus, too, the claim of the preacher that through persuasion alone, as embodied in the sermon, can the sinful be won to repentance, will receive support and graphic presentation from the following agadic statement: מרגלית טובה היתה תלויה בצוארו של אברהם אבינו שכל חולה שרואה אותה מיד מתרפא[153] —"A precious pearl was suspended from Abraham's neck, and all the sick who looked at it were immediately restored to health." Repentance may well be represented by pearls, since pearls depend for their best ornamental effects on unity, that is, they must be properly strung together, and repentance, likewise, except during the special Ten Days of Repentance, requires for its potency the united profession and plea of the whole congregation. Hence the force of the enigmatic rabbinic declaration: The precious pearl, the spirit of repentance, that Abraham awakened in the sick of soul, was suspended, as it were, from his neck, that is, rested on the vigor of his pleading voice.[154]

But Luntshitz does not rely entirely on his interpretative faculty for the amplification of his thought. While using to the fullest extent the standard sources whence Jewish preachers of all ages have drawn their best illustrative material, he seems to recognize the inadequacy of a method that rests on memory and is aided by ingenuity but lacks in vividness and in imaginative appeal. Supplementary to the perennial sources of the past, therefore, he introduces new illustrative elements, based on personal observation and experience and conjured up by a lively fancy. His sermons thus abound in apt and striking analogies derived from the plain facts of everyday life, and in impressive parables drawn with imaginative in-

[152] עי"נ, תצא, p. 23b. [153] B. B. 16b. [154] או"ל, pp. 6b–7a.

sight and natural simplicity. The thought, for example, that when our fancied grievances remain unredressed it is not that the loving Father of the universe is indifferent to our welfare and unheedful of our cries but that in His sight the trivialities we magnify to our own hurt appear in all their naked insignificance, receives added clearness and emphasis from the analogy of the child who plays with his toys and cries out bitterly when some passer-by chooses to thwart him in his childish plans, only to discover that his own father remains quite unmoved by the imagined outrage.[155] The prime need of the penitential mood and the subsequent promise of divine reconciliation, find their exact parallel in the process of restoration that follows the rupture of a human friendship. While both parties are equally anxious to see their former relationships reestablished, neither of them seems willing to take the initiative, until the usual compromise is effected whereby the younger of the two is to go forth to meet the older and the latter, by way of reciprocity, is to set out immediately thereafter on the same peaceful errand.[156]

Men of much erudition need no testimonials of ordination; it is for men of superficial training and meagre accomplishments, that the meretricious honor is chiefly intended. An edifice built of very costly materials needs no exterior decorations to make it beautiful; it is only when an inferior grade of stone or timber enters into its walls, that the painter's art of ornamentation is regretfully invoked.[157] God often denies to His faithful children the things they regard as necessary to their happiness, such as abundant possessions and sensuous pleasures, bestowing them instead on those who disobey His will. But these apparent deprivations are true signs of His mercy. The child clamoring for some unwholesome food

[155] כ"י קדושים, p. 74d. [156] או"ל, p. 19.
[157] עו"א, P. III, Ser. 8, p. 74b.

which his father forthwith casts unto the dog, may well complain of his father's misplaced affection. Yet to the maturer mind it becomes increasingly evident that parental love knows how to give by withholding.[158] The man who squanders his time and fortune on the fleeting pleasures of the earth, instead of devoting his energies to the storing up of the permanent treasures of the spirit, is like the merchant who makes a long journey to one of the great fairs for the purpose of getting acquainted with trade conditions and of acquiring needed merchandise at advantageous prices but who, immediately upon his arrival, attracted by the novelty and variety of the scenes presented, plunges into an incessant round of pleasure such as the many places of doubtful entertainment may afford, only to discover, when he has had his fill, that the fair is over and that it has brought him nothing but nauseous satiety and bitter regret.[159]

Again, the righteous are the defenders of their generation. When God in His great wisdom chooses to remove them, it is not that He wishes to abandon His defenceless children; He rather means to teach them the virtue of self-reliance. There was once a mighty king who ruled over many provinces and labored steadily and lovingly for the peace and happiness of his subjects. One of his dominions, the largest among them, felt especially secure, despite repeated attacks by surrounding enemies, because there lived in its midst a brave warrior possessed of much military skill and resourcefulness. As often as the peace of the province was threatened by some foe or another, this their unvanquished hero would ward off the attack and cause the reign of tranquillity to continue. Once, however, a number of foreign tribes formed an alliance to war against the province. This intelligence aroused

[158] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 3, p. 6c.
[159] *Ibid.* Ser. 6, p. 9c.

much anxiety and fear. The people dreaded the consequence of such a united attack. Their hero, on whom they solely depended, might be overcome by the concerted effort of so numerous a host. In their fear and dismay they addressed a plea for additional military help to their king, only to receive in reply the peremptory order that their national hero repair forthwith to the king's court to abide there for the duration of the impending war. The consternation the royal decree created knew no bounds. Bereft of their invincible leader, how could they hope to withstand the formidable forces arrayed against them? At this critical juncture, one of the wise men arose and said: "Blame not the king. He is no cruel master. He knows that a single hero cannot cope successfully with the present situation. All of us must perform the feats of heroism of which we are capable if we are to survive the combat. We have long been nestling in the comfortable security which comes from the knowledge that one great warrior can wage and win our battles. We have grown flabby and faint of heart. The native heroism of our souls has been stifled. This the king knows full well. He has therefore caused the staff on which we have been leaning to be taken away from us that we may learn to stand unaided and walk with confidence." Thus wisdom spoke, and the people hearkened to its voice. They boldly and bravely set out to meet the enemy, and with a courage born of despair they fought against overwhelming odds and emerged victorious.[160]

It is in this wise that Luntshitz develops his ideas and presents his message. In his earlier works, as in the עוללות אפרים, for example, he omits the recapitulation and appeal even as he dispenses with the exordium, making the application run

[160] עו"א, P. IV, Ser. 5, p. 107d.—For other examples of his more elaborate parables, see P. II, Ser. 22, p. 35a, Ser. 25, p. 37d, Ser. 30, p. 45b; P. III, Ser. 1, p. 67a, etc.

continuously through the body of the sermon. The conclusion of the sermon thus coincides with the completion of the thought-development. In his later works, however, as in the אורח לחיים and the עמודי שש, products of a maturer style, he takes considerable pains to construct a vigorous and penetrating conclusion even as he does to frame a logical and incisive introduction. The application, preceded by a brief recapitulation, is couched in compact form and placed at the very close of the sermon, thus bringing to a fit end a message vibrant with beauty and power.

5

In the history of Jewish preaching, Ephraim Luntshitz occupies a position of preëminence by virtue of the high literary quality of his work, the great spiritual depth of his thought, the sublime daring of his faith. Alone, and far removed from the wider literary currents of the day, he yet evolved an individual style of preaching as colorful and effective as it was novel and unique. Reared in a milieu much given to the discipline of conformity and routine, he yet maintained undimmed the bright visions of his soul; and with an insight and power truly prophetic, he pierced through the hard and cold surface crust of congealed custom and practice and brought to view the sparkling and refreshing waters of the spirit. Called to labor in an age steeped in self-righteousness and arrogance, when the voice of the seer was often drowned in outbursts of vituperation and calumny, he yet clung to his faith in the spiritual potentialities of men and in the healing power of divine truth; and with a courage that was never known to wince or falter, he encountered the evil forces and influences of his day, leaving in his writings a record of great spiritual adventure if not of glorious personal triumph.

VIII.

JONATHAN EYBESHITZ

Passionate Pleader

I

THE impression is widely current that in the eighteenth century the Jewish sermon had reached such a low level of purity and worth, had sunk to such abysmal depths of inanity and futility, that nothing short of a volcanic eruption, such as the revolutionary changes in Jewish life at the opening of the new century actually provided, could have lifted it once again into the bright light of relevancy and purposefulness. This sweeping estimate, whatever its elements of truth, is in the main uncritical and unhistorical. The quality of a literary product of one generation cannot be properly gauged by the altered interests and tastes of another. Every age creates its own standards of measurement. That the proud children of an era of emancipation would turn away with disdainful mien from some of the intellectual and spiritual activities in which their fathers greatly delighted, should occasion little surprise; but that students of a later period could view these efforts with contempt and brand them as meaningless and worthless, because no longer serviceable, would seem to argue an amazing want of historical perspective. True, the preoccupation of the eighteenth-century Jew with Halaḥa and rabbinic hermeneutics vitiated in no small measure earlier currents of Jewish thought and expression. It produced a lamentable dislocation of emphasis in the sphere of Jewish learning. It clothed mere ingenuity with the dignity of sound reasoning. It often mistook the elaborate scaffolding

of tangled citations for the flesh and blood of true ideas. The idolatry of dialecticism, so alluring to many an eager student of the Torah, dissipated much mental energy meant for graver and more fruitful enterprises. But this inordinate devotion to subtle disputation neither barred nor crowded out the "things stationed at the very summit of civilization." The ancient shrines of ethical thought and spiritual purpose had lost none of their solemn devotees. To be sure, the "science of Judaism," largely busied with historical investigation and critical analysis, could receive little impetus from an erudition so completely disorganized and from a creativeness so extravagantly fanciful. Studies pertaining to Judaism, explorations into Israel's past, his history and literature, could not but languish in an atmosphere laden with the mists of medieval sophistry. But Judaism itself, be it never forgotten, had suffered no diminution in vitality and vigor. In its essential spirit, in all that concerned its ethical faith, its spiritual idealism, its life-encompassing discipline, it preserved its pristine purity and power. Out of the mountainous heaps of intricate and disjointed talmudic discussions, there still shone forth, like some flaming lava, the unquenchable religious ideals of the Jew. And, ironically enough, the very branch of the literature of the time most often stigmatized as decadent, bears most striking testimony to the purity and virility of the dominant principles of Israel's faith.

Those who hold in derision the eighteenth-century sermon seem unable to distinguish between outer form and inner content, between time-conditioned modes of expression and intrinsic qualities of thought and feeling. They scorn the method, and hence they must also spurn the message. They disapprove the subtleties and artificialities of the exegesis, and hence they must also reprobate the penetrating insight and lofty pronouncements of the preacher. They frown upon

the crude and cumbersome frame, and hence they must also withhold their gaze from the variegated beauties of the picture. There is no denying the truth that an unrefined and unwieldy medium will mar thoughts and sentiments in themselves true and noble, and that the most exalted motive will suffer marked deterioration when wedded to a method inapt and distasteful. But to deny all merit to that which is reputedly imperfect, is to transgress the bounds of reason. Moreover, even as regards the patently grotesque technique of most of the preachers of the time, it cannot but be presumed that their contemporaries truly relished the particular forms of expression employed. In a word, it must have been a technique that best suited the intellectual taste of the age, however bewildering and even repellent it may appear to us today. And surely, the preacher, though monitor and guide in all things pertaining to the spirit, must needs resort, for the attainment of his larger purpose, to the best tools his own peculiar environment affords. That many mediocre preachers of the time, familiar with the current method but bereft of the instinct of the skilled craftsman, managed the traditional homiletical material in truly barbaric fashion, is as certain as that the most gifted and also most popular among them transcended the natural limitations of an infelicitous vehicle, and, despite the occasional extravagances of an exuberant fancy, succeeded in unfolding a message of much beauty and power. And an age that could boast of such a dynamic spiritual personality as Jonathan Eybeshitz, whose sermons, with all their defects, have won the admiration and homage of these many generations of Jewish preachers, could hardly be described as sterile or debased.

2

Jonathan Eybeshitz was born in Cracow, in 1690.[1] He was a lineal descendant of Nathan Spira, author of the kabbalistic work מגלה עמוקות, from whom he may have inherited his pronounced predilection for the occult and mystical. His early education he received at the hands of his father, Rabbi Nathan, who in addition to grounding the young boy in the necessary elements saw fit to initiate him also into the mysteries of the Kabbalah.[2] When only a lad of twelve, he suffered the loss of his father, who for the two preceding years had occupied the post of Rabbi at Eibenschütz, Moravia,—whence his surname is derived. Bereft of his teacher and protector, he had to wander forth in search of knowledge and further mental training, and with the financial assistance of the Eibenschütz congregation[3] he made his way to the Yeshiba at Prossnitz, presided over by Meir Eisenstadt, whose memory and worth he greatly cherished.[4] He then attended in succession such other well-known schools of rabbinic learning as those at Holleschau, Nikelsburg, and Prague.

While in Prague, having attained the ripe age of eighteen, he married the daughter of Isaac Spira, then Rabbi of Jungbunzlau, Bohemia, under whose protecting roof he found not only paternal care and affection but also keen stimulus for intellectual effort.[5] When his father-in-law had

[1] There seems to be some uncertainty as to the place of his birth. There are those who claim that he was born in Pinczow, Government Radon (*see* Moritz Ehrentheil *Jüdische Charakterbilder*, p. 1, Pest, 1867; *also*, J. Grünvald, בית יהונתן, הערות והוספות, p. 5a, Maramarossziget, 1908). But Carl Anton, who knew Eybeshitz, having studied in Prague under his guidance for seven years, gives Cracow as his birth-place. See *Kurze Nachricht von dem Falschen Messias Shabbethai Zebi*, p. 49, Wolfenbüttel, 1752.

[2] כרתי ופלתי, הקדמה, Altona, 1763. [3] בית יהונתן, p. 5.

[4] יערות דבש, P. I, Ser. 4, p. 26d, Carlsruhe, 1779.

[5] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 16, p. 102a.

removed from Jungbunzlau to Lissa, young Eybeshitz went to Hamburg to tarry for a time with his wife's maternal grandfather, Mordecai ha-Kohen, a patron of Jewish learning and protector of needy students of the Torah.[6] There he remained for two years, engaged all the while in the diligent prosecution of the various studies that claimed his interest; and such had been his progress in the mastery of Jewish lore and in the art of pulpit expression that, though only twenty-four years old at the time, he was called to Prague to fill the office of preacher and assist in the conduct of the local Yeshiba. Accordingly, in 1714, he returned to his beloved Prague, this time as preacher and teacher; and all through the twenty-seven years of his incumbency he never relaxed the effort to raise up many disciples and to build up worthy Jewish character. As head of the Yeshiba, to which position he was in due time promoted, and as eloquent and fearless preacher, he exerted an influence that went beyond the confines of his seat of office; though in his own community some influential members, whose enmity he had somehow incurred, accused him of harboring strong leanings toward the Shabbethai Zebi heresy, from which charge he had to clear himself by direct public disavowal.[7]

When in 1741, Joshua Falk, author of פני יהושע, had left Metz to assume the rabbinate at Frankfort on-the-Main, Eybeshitz was chosen as his successor. To this new field he soon transferred all the multifarious activities of his busy life in Prague. Young students in ever-larger numbers flocked to him in Metz even as they had done in Prague. It was in Metz that his halaḥic commentary אורים ותומים was written, and it was there, too, that some of his best sermons were preached. His fame as profound rabbinic scholar and great popular preacher induced the congregation of Fuerth, in 1746, to

[6] הקדמה, כרתי ופלתי. [7] קונטרס חיי יהונתן, בית יהונתן, p. 7b.

elect him as its Rabbi, an offer which, however, Eybeshitz could not accept as the Metz congregation would not release him from his contract.[8] At the expiration of his term of office in Metz, in 1750, he was called to assume the duties of Chief Rabbi of the three communities: Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbeck; and in this post, with its arduous tasks and bitter trials, he remained the last fourteen years of his life.

Shortly after his arrival in Altona, the old charge of Shabbethaian sympathies was revived and hurled against him with great fury, this time by a group of able men, chief of whom was Jacob Emden, who then resided in Altona and who regarded the position Eybeshitz had been called to fill as the heritage of his fathers.[9] The ensuing controversy grew into a bitter and prolonged conflict; and it ended, as such storms generally end, in pitiful futility and shameless sordidness. Some historians, however, have magnified the importance of the venomous verbal struggle, elevating it to an event of supreme historical significance.[10] It certainly caused Eybeshitz much distraction and anguish. In fact, he attributes the untimely death of his wife to the vexation and grief the widespread turmoil brought her.[11] But we do not see how the private squabble and personal malevolence affected the currents of Jewish life and thought. That those who led in the assault on Eybeshitz, upon his character and spiritual integrity, were actuated by other than holy motives, seems now quite evident. When one, accused of heresy, emphatically denies the charge and publicly condemns and anathematizes the adherents of the false doctrine imputed to him, as did

[8] בית יהונתן, p. 11.

[9] מגילת ספר, p. 209, Warsaw, 1896—בשבט התועדו ג'ק על אודות מינוי רב חדש, והיו רבים חפצים להשיבני לנחלת אבותי.

[10] *See* Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, X, pp. 385–418, Leipzig, 1868; David Kahana, תולדות המקבלים, P. II, pp. 20–64, Tel Aviv, 1927.

[11] הקדמה, לוחת עדות.

Eybeshitz in a notable sermon delivered during those turbulent days,[12] it should be amply sufficient to quiet the just misgivings of the zealous guardians of the truth. And when the defendant in the case, confronted with cryptic utterances of his, chooses to interpret his own abstruse statements in a way that must dispel all doubt and fear as to the orthodoxy of his tenets and views, as did Eybeshitz in the matter of the suspicious amulets ascribed to him and produced as evidence,[13] it should require no further searching and probing to compose the issue. The persistency of the attack in the face of forthright denial and decisive rebuttal reflects an active ill-will inconsistent with pious protestations. It may well be that Eybeshitz, a practical as well as theoretical Kabbalist, found some members of the heretical fraternity congenial and hence showed them undue favor or sympathy,—an attitude and conduct calculated to arouse suspicion in ages of greater tolerance than presumably prevailed in eighteenth-century Jewry. But the suggestion that he actually shared their beliefs and hopes touching the person of Shabbethai Zebi, is too fantastic to merit serious consideration. His learning and sagacity preclude the possibility, his life and teachings repudiate the imputation, of such a monstrous aberration.[14]

It is worthy of record that the ceaseless bombardment of

[12] *Ibid.* pp. 72b–78b. [13] *Ibid.* pp. 63–71; Anton, pp. 85–117.

[14] When professional historians can err so egregiously, it may be profitable to turn to the simple reasoning prompted by admiration and friendship. It is inconceivable, writes Anton, that Eybeshitz should have professed, in whatever secret a manner, a belief in the messiahship of Shabbethai Zebi. For what does the Jew associate with the term Messiah? Nothing but this: that He would gather all Israel and lead them back to the land of Israel; that He would restore Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple; that the nations of the earth would rally around the banner of Judaism. Had any of these things come to pass? Why, Israel was still scattered over the face of the earth; the Temple still lay in ruins; and Shabbethai Zebi was still dead—as a convert to Mohammedanism! (Anton, p. 118.)

petty annoyances and grievous distractions interfered but little with his literary productivity. It only served to retard the appearance of his works. In an atmosphere surcharged with suspicion and ill-will he dared not, it would seem, play into the hands of his enemies. For even a most worthy liturgical poem of his, written in fine style and in a spirit of true devotion, was seized upon by his persecutors and given a heretical turn.[15] His brief kabbalistic dissertation entitled ואבא היום אל העין,[16] met with the same fate. Hence, aside from the לוחת עדות,[17] his apologia, only one of his literary works, his כרתי ופלתי,[18] appeared in his lifetime. His other halaḥic works such as his אורים ותומים,[19] בינה לעתים,[20] בני אהובה,[21] המדע,[22] שר האלף,[23] מטה יונתן,[24] תפארת ישראל,[25] and חסדי יהונתן,[26] were edited and published, in some instances, by his descendants and, in others, by his disciples. The publication of his sermons had to take a like course. His יערות דבש, the best known collection of his sermons, under which title Eybeshitz had grouped all his homiletical works,[27] was prepared for publication by his nephew Jacob of Wojslaw, the first volume appearing in 1779, and the second volume in 1782, in Carls-

[15] לוחת עדות, p. 62a; *see also* הקדמה.

[16] *Ibid.* הקדמה; Arthur S. Weissmann in his מבוא to שם עולם, Vienna, 1891, seeks to demonstrate that the series of questions and answers with which the book begins—pp. 6–22—is nothing but a reproduction of this discussion.

[17] Altona, 1755.

[18] Notes and comments on the יורה דעה, שולחן ערוך, Altona, 1763.

[19] Notes and comments on the חושן משפט, Carlsruhe, 1775.

[20] Comments on the section of the יד החזקה dealing with the holy days, Vienna, 1797.

[21] Notes on the matrimonial laws of the יד, Prague, 1819.

[22] Notes on the laws of menstruation, Carlsruhe, 1773.

[23] Notes on the laws dealing with interest, Prague, N. D.

[24] Notes and comments on the אורח חיים, שולחן ערוך, Warsaw, 1817.

[25] Comments on the laws dealing with Passover, פאקש, 1891.

[26] Dialectic discussions of sundry legalistic questions, Pietrokov, 1897.

[27] *See* כרתי ופלתי, הקדמה.

ruhe. The volume of homilies on the Pentateuch, now bearing the title תפארת יהונתן,[28] was edited by Uri of Dresden after a manuscript in the possession of Gabriel Eybeshitz, a grandchild of the author. The collection of sermons on the prophetical lessons, entitled אהבת יהונתן,[29] was edited by David ben Joseph Madburg, a disciple of the author. A group of four sermons, three of which are memorial sermons and one a sermon on repentance, appearing under the title קשת יהונתן, was published by another of his disciples, Moses of Kutnow.[30] The sermon he preached in his own defense on the twenty-sixth day of Shebat, 1751, and the only one published while he was still living,[31] completes his entire homiletical output known to us.[32]

3

With the early preachers it was a favorite topic of discussion, whether a man who towers high amid a generation of little

[28] Zolkiev, date missing.

[29] Hamburg, 1765 (?)—the Warsaw edition, 1871, contains also a homiletical commentary of his to the Book of Lamentations, under the title אלון בכות.

[30] Lublin, 1784. This little volume contains also a section designated as חצי יהונתן, to which is affixed the erroneous sub-title "a sermon for the Sabbath of Repentance," but which in reality consists of a series of dialectical discussions, more appropriate for the Feast of Passover than for the Sabbath of Repentance, if at all fit material for a homiletical discourse. In fact, from time to time there have appeared some of his dialectical notes, described by the respective editors as homilies and artificially grouped around the pentateuchal lessons of the week, such as נפש יהונתן, Pietrokov, 1901, and דברי יהונתן, Tarnow, 1909.

[31] לוחת עדות, pp. 72a–78b.

[32] Of his other literary efforts worthy of mention here, are his תרי"ג מצות, which contains also, besides a metrical rendition of the positive and negative commandments, a complete list of the commandments, divided into seven sections, and each apportioned to a different day of the week, presumably for study and meditation (Prague, 1765); his פירוש על פסקי חד גדיא, notes on the Passover Haggadah (Lemberg, 1862); and his שם עולם, letters on the Kabbalah, edited by Arthur S. Weissmann after a manuscript in the possession of Adolph Jellinek (Vienna, 1891).

distinction is to be credited with the stature he might have won had he flourished in a more productive age, or is his famed greatness to be assessed solely in relation to the comparative barrenness of his contemporaries. Of Noah, for example, it is said that he "was in his generations a man righteous and wholehearted."[33] Are we to take the view that his probity and sincerity would have gained in strength had his moral career been planted in a more hospitable clime? Or, are we to measure the luster of his righteousness by the dark moral abyss of his time, and thus limit his stature for all time to come?[34]

The question, while relevant, points to nothing that is really decisive. Neither in the ethical nor in the intellectual sphere do we find warrant for the belief that man is the helpless creature of external conditions. On the other hand, the instrumentalities of the mind and the prevailing standards of behavior, even as the material conditions that surround him at birth, come to every individual as part of his social inheritance. The use he makes of this raw material, however, is determined less by the nature of the external means and more by the innate force of his own spirit and character. That mental and moral energy, wherever and whenever present, will produce results of extraordinary worth and significance.

Jonathan Eybeshitz stands forth as the most representative preacher of the eighteenth century because his sermons embody the best, as well as some of the worst, characteristics of Jewish preaching. Weighted down by the most elaborate and intricate technique current in the pulpit of his day, he yet succeeded in preserving his native mental agility and nimbleness of fancy. In his hands, the rigid, ponderous medium acquired elasticity and grace. Above all, the amazing profi-

[33] Gen. 6, 9. [34] Gen. r. 30, 9.

ciency in the use of his tools never blurred his vision of the paramount purpose of his efforts. He employed with great dexterity all the known methods of the trained interpreter only the better to accomplish his prophetic mission. "My chief aim in this sermon is not to multiply interpretations but rather to stimulate a searching review of our shortcomings, especially those we pay so little heed to."[35] He was passionately fond of preaching, but that in which he fairly revelled owed its irresistible fascination for him not to the physical sensations experienced but to the spiritual results anticipated. "My persistent endeavor to exhort you, should occasion no surprise; for I can in all honesty say that I truly live only when I preach."[36] "I may as well confess to you that the most precious hours of my life are those I spend in summoning you to nobler ways of living. From those brief periods, more than from the rest of my whole existence, I draw my happiness and my salvation. For in what other way could a lowly creature like myself hope to obtain divine favor, if not by seeking to safeguard other lives from the encroachment of sin?"[37] Of course, many people are loath to listen to words of admonition. They protest that they are thoroughly aware of the true condition of their souls, and need no prompting from the pulpit. They even question the propriety of one sinful man pestering others with counsels of perfection. "But, as preacher, I mean to do no more than sound the call of duty, my own unworthiness having little or no bearing on the urgency of the call."[38] "To be faithful to one's task as spiritual monitor and guide, one must dare play the role of the mother, whose whole life is consecrated to the greater perfection of her children."[39] "The duty rests upon us to endeavor to improve

[35] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 2, p. 11d. [36] *Ibid.* Ser. 11, p. 71b.
[37] *Ibid.* Ser. 15, p. 98d. [38] *Ibid.* Ser. 14, p. 88c.
[39] קשת יהונתן, p. 10a, Warsaw, 1873.

other lives. This is the reason why in all my preaching I unceasingly call the people to a life of repentance. I know the contempt with which many greet my pulpit utterances. I also know how utterly unworthy I am of performing this high function. For have I not often enough caused others to stumble by the example of my weakness? Yet I persist in my efforts, vaguely hoping that by urging others to strive after greater harmony with God my own spirit may become at one with Him."[40]

The deterrents to hortatory preaching may be numerous but they are not insurmountable. To be sure, there is no man whose life and character are so stainless that he may presume to condemn the shortcomings of others. Truly, we are sinners all. Yet, in view of the imperfections inherent in our nature, it would be folly to desist from reprobating evil until our own conduct has been purged of its impurities.[41] Nor, when religious laws and principles of vital import are openly scouted, can we accept the wisdom of those who would counsel calm forbearance instead of continual remonstrance.[42] "Preaching may prove very beneficial, if it is persisted in. For even as tiny drops of water, falling continuously upon a rock, have the power to wear away its hard substance, so words of admonition, when offered not periodically but steadily, will in time penetrate and transform the hearts of the people."[43] Sound, purposeful, and aggressive preaching is neither fruitless nor unpopular with the masses of the people. True enough, preachers as a class have fallen into great disfavor. But this popular repugnance to current preaching may spring, in most cases, not from the unrestrained temerity of our preachers, but from their excessive timidity. "It is unfortunate that our preachers perpetually deal with themes relating to our

[40] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 6, p. 44c.
[41] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 3, pp. 15c–16b.
[42] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 3, p. 22a.
[43] *Ibid.* Ser. 11, p. 71a.

duties to God. They expatiate on prayer and ritual practices. But they refrain from condemning the evils that disrupt our social relations, such as plunder, deception, expropriation, slander, contention, detraction. The people justly despise such a preacher. They contend that he always soars heavenward, busying himself with the mysterious and remote and averting his gaze from the more patent wrongs, because he is bent on pleasing people. For, sad to say, of many of the above social sins, especially those rising out of the inequitable collection of the special taxes, in which favoritism plays such a glaring part, most of the leading members are guilty . . . Therefore, they say that he deliberately ignores these evil practices. It is for this reason that preachers are held in contempt. But let the preacher, without fear or favor, raise his voice in protest against the malpractices of men of prominence, and the people will soon learn to love him and to delight in his sermons. They will admire his courage and be drawn to his message."[44]

Yet, in spite of this comprehensive view of the preacher's function and the exalted estimate of the power of the spoken word, Eybeshitz harbored no illusions as to the results actually garnered. In fact, he realized most poignantly that the very position of the pulpit among the forces of society militated against its becoming a controlling factor. The expected may interest but cannot startle. Truth, clothed in unwelcome garb, should also come from unexpected places, to impress the mind and stir the imagination. The ordinary layman, he

[44] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 3, p. 17b.—In this connection it may be noted that Eybeshitz held the "Dayanim" of his day derelict in their duty because they limited their activities to the composing of legal disputes. They seem to be unconcerned, he says, about the general spiritual welfare of the community. Such matters they are willing to leave to the lay leaders who, in many instances, are devoid of Jewish learning or other cultural attainments.—*See ibid.* p. 17a.

therefore insisted, and not the official teacher, could more effectively compass the essential aims of the pulpit. Time and again, he urged upon the people the solemn obligation to discountenance evil and, whenever possible, to seek to uproot it. "It is generally thought that the task of reproving men for their misdeeds is solely reserved to preachers and teachers. Laymen, it is felt, should not take up the cudgels for goodness and truth. But this, as I have repeatedly sought to demonstrate, is a false and mischievous notion. The preacher's influence must be less potent in such matters than that of the average layman. For the pronouncements of the former are usually discounted by the humble declaration that no one can be expected to rise to the spiritual level occupied by the rabbi . . . But let a layman address himself to men of like caliber and position, and his words will carry more weight than those of any recognized teacher."[45]

It is a fact, though, that while interested in the physical well-being of his neighbor, the average Jew seems little concerned with his spiritual health. "Let a Jew sustain some material loss, let him find himself the victim of political persecution, and all his fellow-Jews will rush to his rescue . . . When one is critically ill, much concern will be felt by all. Prayers will be offered for his recovery. Nothing will be left undone to relieve him of his suffering. When a Jewish woman experiences the throes of childbirth, the richest and most aristocratic of our ladies gladly volunteer their services to ease her pain. Yes, our reputation among the non-Jews is well-founded: we do love one another. But that love is purely physical; it is love for the body. Of spiritual love, that is, love for the soul of our neighbor, there is but little in our midst. One may fritter his life away in unseemly practices, and none will venture to remonstrate with him. One may

[45] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 10, p. 67b; P. II, Ser. 9, p. 54d.

habitually profane the house of worship with idle talk, he may scoff at things sacred and use foul language, he may engage in petty quarrels and retail slander, and none will let a word of censure escape his lips. Is not this a manifestation of hate, rather than of love?"[46]

Yet, we are closely knit together and form one organism. We are different members of the same body. How, then, can one of our members suffer injury in some vital part without affecting the health and comfort of all the rest of us? "What can it profit me, if, though strictly observant myself, my brother flagrantly violates the law? I may suffer no razor to pass my face, yet if my brother chooses to remove his beard in unlawful fashion, I, too, am half-shaved!"[47] Besides, any serious infraction of the law, any important deviation from the religious discipline, goes counter to the will of God and provokes His displeasure; and if His honor is dear to us, must we not strive to defend it against any assailant, be it our own rebelliousness or the disobedience of others?[48] But, alas! though chary of man's honor, we care little for the honor of God. "When one casts aspersion on some communal leader, or ignores a local ordinance, the rebuke administered is sharp and speedy; but when one transgresses the will of God, it is as if no one could see or speak. Let one, in the midst of a festive gathering, speak disparagingly of one of the invited guests, and all assembled will share in the fray; but let one, in the same gathering, assail with ridicule some religious leader or practice, and there will be none to show any resentment."[49] "We are humbled and dispossessed by the nations of the earth, and our humiliation goes unavenged, because we

[46] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 10, p. 67a.
[47] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 12, p. 72b.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 7, p. 52b.

have ceased to guard zealously the honor of God and of His law."[50]

And, indeed, it is this loss of reverence and the consequent diminution of religious fervor, that is chiefly responsible for the difficulties of our position in the world and the utter disorder in our spiritual life. We seem to have shut God out of our lives. "When some accident befalls a man; instead of ascribing it to God, by whom all actions are weighed, he traces it to nature and his own bad fortune. When sickness overtakes him, he attributes it to overfeeding, or the insalubrity of the climate, and the like. When he fails in business, he blames his own laziness or the negligence of his employees. That God, the moulder of his destiny, may have had something to do with all these, never occurs to him."[51] And a similar mood dominates our thinking when, as a separate group, we experience persecution or discrimination. We say that the ruling powers are cruel, or that some of our members, mingling freely with the princes of the land, have perchance incurred personal disfavor and thus incited hostile feelings toward their people.[52] Yet, in reality, as must be evident to men of true discernment, the world is ruled not by the accidents of nature but by some controlling purpose, to which our daily conduct gives direction and momentum.[53] When the prophet sends forth the invitation: "Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who hath created these? He that bringeth out their host by number, He calleth them all by name,"[54] he means to affirm and to demonstrate the doctrine of individual providence. All things in nature are numbered, and

[50] *Ibid.* As special evidences of the irreverent spirit of the age he mentions the frequent use of God's name in ordinary conversation (יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 4, p. 34b), and also the arrogant and sacrilegious implication involved in the doctrine of the divine rights of kings (*Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 9, p. 58d).

[51] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 10, p. 68b. [52] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 7, p. 54a.

[53] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 12, pp. 71b and 72b. [54] Isa. 40,26.

bear specific designations. Such unfailing watchfulness, such unerring precision, could scarcely be born of chance.[55] And, surely, in the case of Israel, the people with whom God had made an especial covenant, the thought of chance is utterly untenable because it defies all human reasoning. Is it conceivable that after having stamped Israel as the people of His inheritance, He would surrender our destiny to the accidents of time and the incalculable course of a capricious nature?[56] No; we are not the helpless creatures of chance. Our God is not an absentee deity. He may have temporarily withdrawn His divine inspiration from us, as the conditions of our life in the diaspora can testify—and it is this spiritual impoverishment, rather than any physical privations, that we bemoan in our tragic dispersion—but He has not altogether cast off His people; the wise men in Israel still have visions of His presence and hear faint whispers of His voice.[57]

The religious spirit, ever manifesting itself in character and conduct, cannot thrive in hearts from which the consciousness of God's power and purpose is absent. Hence, Jewish life, with all its bustle and radiance, reveals unmistakable signs of inner immobility and decay. "Truly, what may be regarded as the essence of mean character and perverse conduct, ruinous to body and soul alike, are the qualities of pride and of envy. These vices, with which even the pious among us seem infected, form the greatest menace to our spiritual integrity."[58] We can boast of no worthy achievement, we can never hope to strengthen the foundations of our faith, we can look forward to no fruitful cooperative endeavor, as long as the spirit of rivalry, of envy, and of hate, dominates our social relations.[59] To be pious is to be purged

[55] יהונתן, אהבת ואתחנן, p. 75a, Warsaw, 1871.
[56] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 11, p. 66c. [57] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 14, p. 85c.
[58] יהונתן, קשת p. 6a. [59] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 9, p. 57d.

of all hate; the path to piety is peace.[60] Not to harbor ill-feeling for anyone, but extend kindness even to those who hate us, this is to be virtuous. It is a quality of character demanded by human civilization and dictated in Jewish law; and nothing could so glorify Israel as the conversion of this trait into a prime instinct of our nature.[61] But love of fellowman ranks low among our virtues. We would fain choose that in which God takes no delight. Very often people will spend all they have in order to present a new Scroll of the Law to the synagogue, but will with much reluctance contribute to the maintenance of some poor orphan or widow.[62] Men will submit without a murmur to the rabbi's decision in a ritual question, which may entail large monetary losses; but, when worsted in a damage suit, in which the smallest sum is involved, they will rage against the verdict and impute personal prejudice to the judge, all because another human being, the successful litigant, stands to benefit by the decision rendered.[63] They will tell lies about one another, they will spread slanderous reports about one another, they will dip their tongues in the filth of foul speech, and then repair to the synagogue to address solemn petitions to God, altogether confident that their prayers will be answered![64] Yet he who lives in the consciousness of God's presence and strives to follow His ways will not find it difficult to appraise the true worth, and cherish the honor and happiness, of another soul.[65] Hate, even for those with whom we clash, is impossible, when consecrated purpose, and not personal pride, supplies the motive power of conduct. And to a man whose aims rise above self, the rejection or acceptance of his particular plan of action will be of no moment, since the cause he means to serve is furthered

[60] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 12, p. 73a. [61] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 9, p. 57d.
[62] אהבת יהונתן, p. 43a. [63] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 5, p. 38b.
[64] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 9, p. 54d. [65] קשת יהונתן, p. 9b.

in any event.[66] The man who is humble in all his ways, in the private precincts of his own household as well as in the marts of men, and who regards the human soul as precious because it is an emanation of the Divine Spirit, will not only refrain from breathing suspicion about one of good report but will ever defend against slander all those in whose spotless reputation he has reason to trust.[67]

But, unfortunately, neither reverence for God nor love of fellowman is the dominant motive of our life. The vast majority of the people ceaselessly strive after transient satisfactions: money, pleasure, personal glory; and nothing they ever do is free from the taint of lower motives and baser thoughts.[68] "The greatest temptation nowadays is money. Men who will endure suffering, persecution, and degradation for the sake of their religion seem unable to curb the passion for material gain. They will rob and exploit their neighbor, without the least qualm of conscience. At the slightest provocation, they will be moved to vengeance of the most despicable sort. This may be regarded as a truism: He who successfully overcomes the allurement of riches is sure to surrender his life for the glory of God."[69] Not that we should despise the natural wants of the body or renounce all earthly pleasures. Judaism imposes no severe restrictions on the flesh. We are not asked to walk barefoot in snow and sleet, to wear coarse garments next to the skin, to torture the body for the good of the soul. To the contrary, in Judaism the duties of religion are calculated to bring joy rather than pain.[70] "We are unlike other religious groups, who seek to attain saintliness through a discipline of self-mortification, such as fasting and flagellation. They dwell in caves and sustain life with herbs of the field in order to

[66] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 12, p. 75b.
[67] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 3, pp. 20d, 24c, 26a.
[68] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 6, p. 35c and d.
[69] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 7, p. 53d.
[70] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 5, p. 29a.

acquire spiritual health. We, whose inheritance is the Torah, are subject to no such severities. Even the Day of Atonement, on which we are enjoined to afflict ourselves, is ushered in with a festive meal the enjoyment of which constitutes a religious obligation."[71] We do not believe in asceticism. Heathen philosophers may advance the claim that the divine spirit can rest on a man only when he lives in solitude and in self-abnegation; but our Jewish thinkers justly contend that no such preparations, no such conditions and surroundings, are required for the disclosure of the prophetic vision. Did not God speak to Moses out of the burning bush, when he least expected the revelation?[72] Indeed, any form of self-denial which, though faithfully and profitably practised by exceptional individuals, presents a rule of life the masses of the people can hardly be expected to follow, must needs be eliminated as an effective aid to piety and saintly living.[73]

Asceticism as a mode of living is no armor against the sins of the flesh. "Even of Aristotle, who inhabited the solitudes of forests and cliffs and wore raw hides for garments, so that the pleasures of the world might have no charm for him, it is said, that infatuation for a married woman cost him his life."[74] What Judaism, therefore, advocates is not the total abstention from physical comforts and pleasures, but the judicious and temperate use of them. Moderation in all things, this is with us an essential religious precept, intended for saint and sinner alike.[75] The possession of some money may be necessary and useful, but the possession of too much money is superfluous and injurious. Great wealth has often been instrumental in alienating the Jew from his God and his people.[76] Certainly, human happiness flows rather from a con-

[71] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 11, p. 73a.
[72] תפארת יהונתן, בלק, p. 93a.
[73] *Ibid.* קדושים, p. 68d.
[74] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 3, p. 20a.
[75] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 1, p. 4d.
[76] *Ibid.* P. III, Ser. 5, p. 30b.

tented disposition than from the abundance of material possessions.[77] "The princes and leaders of the people are beset by greater difficulties and anxieties than are the common tillers of the soil. The latter are healthy and strong; the former are always ailing. Sensitive to climatic conditions and easily affected by the sudden changes of the seasons, they keep steady company with physicians and druggists."[78] Nor is present wealth a sure safeguard against future want. Frequently, young men will defer marriage to a time when they can well support a family. Their homes must be first stocked with all the things that minister to comfort and give much pleasure. And so they wait until they have amassed a fortune. And yet how often does it happen that the offspring of these belated unions, despite the carefully-laid plans and precautions of the parents, become destitute and dependent in the end?[79]

It is foolish to bemoan the scantiness of one's riches; but when men, who take to heart the insufficiency of their worldly possessions, betray no concern for the poverty of spirit that afflicts them, it is truly deplorable.[80] "This is the essence of love of God: the complete subordination of one's desires and ambitions to the requirements of God's service."[81] "Generals and high court officials, when in the service of the king, willingly and gladly forego their personal comforts and conveniences. In time of war, they breast storms and rain, make their abode in miserable hovels unfit for servants' quarters, go for days together without food and sleep until victory dyes their robes red with the blood of the slain. And shall we not, engaged as we constantly are in the service of the King of kings, subordinate our comforts and pleasures to the necessities of His cause?"[82]

[77] תפארת יהונתן, עקב, p. 105d. [78] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 12, p. 73b.
[79] *Ibid.* p. 78c. [80] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 13, p. 86c.
[81] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 6, p. 36a. [82] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 7, p. 52d.

Accordingly, the aim of our religious discipline is not to bar the pleasures of the senses but to sublimate them, to strip them of their grossness and extravagance, and above all, to restrain their power for evil and enlarge their influence for good. "Herein lies the main difference between the Jewish observance of Sabbath days and festive occasions and that of heathen peoples: we rejoice out of a sense of privilege; they rest content with eating and drinking to satiety, with the unrestrained indulgence of the senses."[83] "Ours is a joy never followed by sorrow and sadness. When one attends a gay gathering ringing with boisterous hilarity, he dances with women decked in jewels, and then retires to a festive board laden with all sorts of dainties, only to discover after a while that the festivity has brought him nothing but satiety, fatigue, heaviness, and dullness . . . There is no secular joy but that is followed by disillusionment and regret. Not so with our religious joys. Each occasion increases our delight and adds something to our power and hope and vision . . . It is just here that we discern one of the qualities differentiating us, the custodians of the Torah, from the rest of the world. Other peoples, on their festive days, indulge in revelry and debauchery. They dance with much abandon, visit playhouses, tell obscene stories, and even frequent brothels. But this is not Israel's way of expressing joy. He, too, rejoices on his holidays, when in the synagogue he intones special prayers and hymns dedicated to the glory of God, and when at home he chants songs of praise and thanksgiving, the while the family meal is being served."[84] Thus, Judaism does not spurn the material things of life; it only insists that they be made to minister to the soul as well as to the body. The family-table may be an altar of the spirit as well as a food-counter, if the

[83] אה"י, אחרון של פסח, p. 106a.
[84] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 3, p. 18d.

pleasures of the palate induce also a peaceful and happy mood in all the members gathered round it; if, as invisible guests, Torah, wisdom, and ethical refinement, claim their thought and attention; and, above all, if out of sheer gratitude they invite the poor and the needy to share in their abundance.[85] It is only when bodily pleasure becomes an end in itself, independent of the life of the spirit and unrelated to any of its needs, that the religious temper bristles with opposition and loud protest.

To divorce religion from the physical life of the individual, reducing man to the level of the animal, would nullify the spiritual gains of the centuries and sap the foundations of our faith. Judaism, with its life-encompassing discipline, on the contrary, seeks to unify man's existence on earth, to invest the smallest physical detail with purposefulness and sanctity. Hence, it frowns upon ambitions purely material and indulgences solely sensuous. "However, the masses of the people nowadays trust in the power of money and reject the chief source of our delight, the Torah and its precepts. They are sullen and peevish when they cannot mingle with the crowd and engage in levity and meaningless chatter with women."[86] But, "a good Jew will abstain from unnecessary association with women.[87] He will studiously

[85] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 16, p. 94a. [86] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 4, p. 32b.

[87] Aside from voicing considerable displeasure with the unedifying and unhelpful forms of social relaxation, such as card-playing and parties of all sorts, Eybeshitz condemns especially, and with much vigor, the free commingling of the sexes for recreational purposes, such as dancing and the like. He brands these popular diversions as the insidious devices of "the evil inclination," menacing to health of body and soul alike (יע"ר, P. I, Ser. 2, p. 15b; Ser. 4, pp. 34d, 35b; Ser. 8, p. 56d; Ser. 13, p. 84a). On one occasion he appeals to the women of the congregation in the following words: "I am addressing myself especially to you, daughters of Israel, of whom it is written: 'All glorious is the King's daughter within the palace' (Ps. 45,14). Do not, in imitation of your non-Jewish neighbors, stroll through the streets and parks of the city

avoid places wherein temptations abound. Surely, he will never permit himself to enter a theatre or an opera-house where actors disport themselves on the stage in unrestrained frivolity."[88] Therefore, "Brothers awake! Do not fritter away your time in doing vain things. Abstain from idle talk and empty discussions. Disputes about war, surmises as to outcome and end, like the showy magnificence of military parades, may be of interest to government officials, but what, besides the wasting of our time, can such things mean to us?"[89]

For us, fortunately, to relieve tedium or add zest to life, it is unnecessary to resort to such unprofitable diversions as card-playing, novel-reading, or commonplace talk; we can give our time to the study of Torah "whereby we come to know the nature of God and the will of God."[90] The Torah in all its ramifications still constitutes our most treasured possession, and the only source of comfort, in the lands of our dispersion. "Therefore our hearts should well up with gratitude to God for the miraculous preservation of the Torah through all these long centuries of our exile, when, as a people, we have been ceaselessly wandering from land to land; and the consciousness of our responsibility should impel us to

---

where young men congregate. You are of royal descent; and your glory should be enthroned in the home" (*Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 12, p. 81a).

Of the ordinances instituted by him to safeguard the purity of the community, he mentions the one whereby an engaged young man was permitted to call on his fiancée only once a month, the visit, if in the evening, not to extend beyond ten o'clock (*Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 12, p. 78a). He also ordained that the festivities marking the engagement of a couple terminate at ten o'clock, "for it is just at that hour that God resumes His nightly lamentation over the destruction of the Temple" (*Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 11, p. 73b). He was also responsible for the ordinance which sought to regulate, in the interest of public morals, the prescribed visits to the cemetery by the men and women of his congregation, allocating to the women the day preceding the specified date (*Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 14, p. 88).

[88] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 8, p. 51d.

[89] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 4, p. 29a.

[90] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 10, p. 63c.

employ every means at our disposal to buttress and sustain it."[91] The notion, widely entertained, that the study of Torah must be confined to men of proved capacity, such as rabbis and teachers, accords but ill with traditional views and practices. We have always regarded Torah as our joint possession, the heritage of the entire people; and whether we study much or little, the ranks of the wise men in Israel break wide open to receive us.[92] Neither lack of time nor inadequate mental equipment can exempt us from this our common obligation; for even one quarter of an hour devoted daily to the study of some ethical work will bring spiritual refreshment.[93] What drugs are to the diseased body, ethical instruction is to the disordered soul: a passage or two contemplated at stated times, even as a tiny pill or a few drops of medicine taken at regular intervals, will restore and strengthen.[94] For Torah aims at something higher than knowledge and learning; it seeks to implant piety and purify conduct. Therefore, even those whose labors in the Torah are more extensive should open their studies with an ethical passage, that they might thus be stimulated to live the life as well as master the law.[95] Surely, such study of Torah, the daily perusal of a page or two from some inspiring book, should present no difficulty to anyone, whether learned or unlearned, male or female, since some of the works referred to are accessible in the vernacular.[96] Besides, if a knowledge of Hebrew is wanting, as indeed it is, why not supply the deficiency? If we teach our children French and Italian, why can we not also help them to master

[91] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 4, p. 28a.
[92] קשת יהונתן, p. 5d.
[93] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 12, p. 73d.
[94] קשת יהונתן, p. 10d.
[95] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 12, p. 76b.
[96] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 5, p. 40c; Ser. 12, p. 78d.—Of this class of ethical writings, he mentions specifically לב טוב, of Isaac ben Eliakim of Posen, Prague, 1620; שמחת הנפש, of Manoaḥ Hendel Kirchhahn, 1707; and תם וישר (rendition of ספר הישר), of Jacob ben Jeremiah Mattithia Ha-Levi, Frankfurt a.M., 1674.

the Hebrew tongue?[97] "But, alas, Hebrew has become an unfortunate, deserted bride, pining away in her father's house. There is no one to cherish its purity and distinctiveness. Men who spare no effort to impart to their children a knowledge of French and German and similar languages, show no interest in the Hebrew tongue. Indeed, who is there among us that can converse in pure Hebrew?"[98]

If love of Torah has been declining, it is largely because young boys, even those endowed with fine mental qualities and blessed with homes free from all financial care, are snatched from school and thrust into the arms of commerce.[99] And when perchance parents permit their sons to pursue their studies in schools of Jewish learning a little longer, then marriage calls a sudden halt to their intellectual labors. They forthwith leave the house of study, become deeply engrossed in practical problems and material ambitions, and the pursuit of Torah is definitely ended.[100] Again, if our young men, as is the case in many instances, do not seem very eager to tarry long in schools of Jewish learning, it may be because the incentive to continue is lacking. Students of the Torah are not accorded the respect and honor due them. In fact, many people even hold them in contempt.[101] Furthermore, while some communities take great pride in providing these poor students with the necessaries of life so as to free their minds from extraneous cares and worries, other communities, even former centers of Jewish learning, do not feel as keenly their

[97] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 12, p. 74d.

[98] P. II, Ser. 2, p. 12b.

[99] P. II, Ser. 11, p. 69b.

[100] P. I, Ser. 2, p. 13c.—"But this," he exclaims, "must not continue! I mean to see to it that the lay leaders of the community enact an ordinance, violation of which shall entail the severe penalty of excommunication, to the effect that not until five years have elapsed shall a newly-married student leave his accustomed place in the house of study. We must persist in doing good, and as for a livelihood, let us trust in the Lord!"

[101] *Ibid.* Ser. 16, p. 101d.

responsibility in the matter, doing little or nothing to relieve the distress and hardships of these struggling students.[102] Besides, as they view the gloomy prospect before them, how can these destitute though erudite young men muster the necessary courage and strength to continue their labors in the Torah? The rich will not give them their daughters in marriage, because, as they frankly aver, they dare not doom their offspring to a life of poverty. They forget, though, that while earthly possessions may dwindle and disappear, learning embedded in personality, defies fickle fortune and fears not armed despoiler.[103] In short, "the Torah which is the essence of our life and the acme of the soul's perfection is dwindling in power because it is held in low esteem. We despise students of the Torah. Those whom we should prize as precious ornaments we treat as if they were cheap clay in the workshop of the potter. The ignorant masses look down upon them and even make sport of them. Truly, he who busies himself with Torah in these days merits great reward. For what ulterior motive can we ascribe to his enterprise? Disrespect and ridicule beset him on all sides. Who of you would feel honored to have even the most brilliant student as your son-in-law? Of course, if a student is rich and possesses other desirable qualities, his proficiency in Torah will be no handicap to him. But where is the man who will deliberately choose as husband for his daughter a young man who possesses much knowledge but is poor in worldly goods? Indeed, unable to support a family, a student cannot even dream of matrimony. For as yet there is no community that undertakes to maintain with funds out of the public treasury a house of study designed for married scholars . . . And yet the moneys expended so lavishly on candles for the synagogue, on costly embellishments for the Scrolls of the Law, and on richly-ornamented curtains

[102] P. II, Ser. 16, p. 94a; Ser. 7, p. 44c. [103] P. I, Ser. 5, p. 41b.

for the Ark, would suffice to sustain many a student of the Torah."[104]

This want of zeal for Torah, productive of so much ignorance, irreverence, and frivolity, drains Judaism, with its living traditions and time-tested discipline, of its vitality and spiritual influence. What we do not love to contemplate, we can find no joy in doing; and what we do without joy, must enslave and depress the spirit rather than liberate and exalt it.[105] This is the curse of our present plight, that we do not perform our religious obligations with joy. They have become for many an irksome task, a mere perfunctory routine, instead of a blessed opportunity and a joyful experience. Men are very meticulous about their dress. They change their attire frequently. They must appear in immaculate garb cut after the latest pattern. Headgear and footgear, especially, must conform in smallest detail to the fantastic designs of the arbiters of fashion. Yet, as regards the condition of their phylacteries, the ritual fringes, and the like, they manifest little concern. These may look shabby and worn, and be possibly defective in some important respect; but why incur expense and increase the weight of the burden?[106]

And such is the deadening effect of a soulless routine, that even prayer, the highest exercise of the soul and the most direct approach to God's presence, is coarsened and profaned and rendered worthless by the formal repetition of words issuing from the lips but not from the heart.[107] "I entreat you to offer your prayers and meditations unto God, not as the commandment of men learned by rote, but as the expression of your own hearts and minds; for only such prayers have the

[104] P. I, Ser. 8, p. 54c.
[105] P. II, Ser. 10, p. 62b.
[106] P. II, Ser. 5, p. 29b–c.
[107] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 3, p. 18c; Ser. 5, p. 33d; קשת יהונתן, p. 3d.

power to bring us nigh to our Father who is in heaven."[108] "This is the essential requirement for an acceptable prayer, that it proceed from the very depths of the heart. When the Psalmist exclaimed: 'Out of the depths have I called Thee, O Lord,'[109] he meant to indicate that his prayer fulfilled this requirement."[110] And, indeed, "happy is the man whose prayers flow from a broken and contrite heart, and bear the stains of his tears; for, surely, such prayers will not go unanswered."[111] Of course, no trivial petitions, such as those for wealth and honor and material success, however earnest and heartfelt the plea, will find favor in the sight of God. Only that is true prayer which aims at some spiritual benefit. One may properly and hopefully beseech God for bodily sustenance, provided the purpose of the entreaty is not that he be well-fed but that he have the necessary strength and peace of mind to fulfil his religious duties.[112] Nor can one hope to receive an answer to his prayer when his relations with his fellowmen are such as to make him unworthy of divine favor, when, for example, he exhibits an unforgiving spirit, a want of kindness and mercy, in dealing with his neighbor.[113] But let one whose life breathes peace and truth and kindliness, voice his deepest needs in prayer, whether in the Hebrew tongue or, if unfamiliar with its accents, in the vernacular, specifying some physical need, to be sure, but laying greatest emphasis on the needs of the spirit, and the Father of mercies will surely hearken to his voice.[114] But, grievous to relate, we have not learned how to pray. Too many chirp and mutter multitudinous prayers and supplications as if the words had no meaning.[115] And those who lead the congregation in

[108] P. II, Ser. 10, p 65. [109] Ps. 130,1.
[110] P. I, Ser. 1, p. 8d. [111] P. I, Ser. 4, p. 29a.
[112] P. II, Ser. 5, pp. 27d–28a; Ser. 12, p. 74b.
[113] *Ibid.* Ser. 5, p. 28b.
[114] P. II, Ser. 12, p. 74b; P. I, Ser. 1, p. 8d. [115] P. I, Ser. 1, p. 4c.

prayer, "the stupid cantors," center their attention not on the soulful prayers but on their senseless chants, as revolting to the sensitive ear as the "screeching of some unclean fowl." In many cases, they do not even know how to enunciate the words correctly, adepts though they be in wedding melodies filched from some opera or some other disreputable source to the words of sacred prayer.[116] Nor is the accursed habit of the people to taint the pure atmosphere of the synagogue with idle talk, and even with acrimonious disputes and foul slander, conducive to create a mood fit for worship. "To intersperse our prayers with meaningless chatter is to create a thick cloud that must effectually intercept their upward flight."[117] And what shall we say of the distractions and contentions arising from the unseemly and reprehensible practice of selling "ritual honors," as if these were the special privileges of a particular class? The irony of it all, that in the synagogue where humbleness of spirit should sit enthroned and brotherly love prevail, selfish pride and arrogance parade in full regalia and the grossest inequalities among men receive sanction and prominence![118]

Judaism, it cannot be too often accentuated, demands of its devotees not external conformity but inner spiritual integrity. To be sure, it attaches great importance to ritual law and ceremonial practice, even if these owe their origin not to the fundamental Law of the Jew, the Bible, but to subsequent rabbinic legislation. In fact, it treats with greater severity the open violation of a traditional rite than the infraction of a Mosaic ordinance. For the moulders and guardians of the oral law, the rabbis and leaders in Israel, are the sentinels

[116] P. I, Ser. 5, p. 39d; Ser. 14, p. 89d.

[117] P. I, Ser. 4, p. 29a; Ser. 15, p. 98b.

[118] P. II, Ser. 3, p. 18d. He commends the Prague congregation for having devised and instituted a system of rotation whereby these "honors" are distributed equally among all the members.

vigilantly watching and protecting Judaism; and while disobedience of orders emanating from highest authority will entail grave penalties, disregard of the prompt commands of the humblest sentinel on duty will mean sure forfeiture of life itself.[119] Judaism, therefore, discountenances the fallacious reasoning whereby the spiritually indolent seek to gain exemption from the prescribed traditional modes of living. Since God, so they argue, values only the motive, the aim, then the external act in which the inner spirit finds concrete and temporary expression, while it may be of some moment to the limited vision of man, can have no significance in the sight of the Omniscient. They forget, though, that intention is clarified and stimulated by action, and that the most powerful motive will sink into utter imbecility unless its strength is conserved and renewed by frequent manifestation and repeated exertion. True, "God wants the heart"; but fit method lends power to pure motive, and noble devotion exalts external action.[120] The disembodied aim grows faint and vanishes; the aimless act loses all meaning and potency. Yet, most people, during the penitential season, for example, deem it their duty to fast, to recite special prayers and to chant appropriate Psalms, but it never occurs to them to ascertain and contemplate the main purpose of these helpful exercises.[121] Surely, if with all our pious mutterings we still retain in our possession what rightfully belongs to others, if the lie we have spoken still points its finger of condemnation at us, if beneath our fraternal protestations there still lurks the unchastened love of self, ever ready to fatten on the helplessness and degradation of others, then we have multiplied entreaties and suffered affliction to no purpose.[122] "The prerequisite of sincere repentance is the effort to remove all obstacles in the way of

[119] P. I, Ser. 2, p. 14c. [120] *Ibid.* p. 10c.
[121] P. I, Ser. 5, p. 38a; Ser. 13, p. 84a. [122] P. I, Ser. 14, p. 87d.

spiritual restoration. The rabbinic dictum that the Day of Atonement holds no promise of forgiveness for our social derelictions, is susceptible of the widest application. It refers, of course, to such patent wrongs as robbery, usury, fraudulence, usurpation, incrimination, and the like. But it also embraces hate, insincerity, disparagement, gossip, slander, ridicule, humiliation, and misdirection."[123] But we have lost sight of the real end our traditional forms and institutions forever labor to achieve. We have substituted lifeless routine for genuine devotion, and soulless habit for purposeful action.[124]

Indeed, it is this failure to penetrate into the true spirit and purpose underlying our specifically Jewish forms and practices that accounts for the readiness with which so many espouse the customs and manners of their non-Jewish neighbors. Having no strong attachment for their own ways of living they eagerly imitate those of the dominant group. Non-Jews shave their beards and cover their heads with wigs, why not act as they do? Non-Jews decorate their homes with statues and images of all sorts, why not follow the prevailing fashion?[125] There is, of course, much about the non-Jew worthy of imitation. He is known, for example, to honor his parents as befits a loyal and devoted son. He is reputed to maintain a high standard of honesty in his business dealings. Why not emulate his example in such matters? But it is the vices, and not the virtues, of the non-Jew that we are most eager to imitate.[126]

Of course, when assailed for his laxity in the observance of his own traditional customs and for the spiritless performance of his religious duties, the Jew never fails to put forth the specious plea that, denied an independent national existence and constrained to mingle with foreign groups, he cannot be ex-

[123] P. I, Ser. 6, p. 44d; קשת יהונתן, p. 9c. [124] קשת יהונתן, p. 11c.
[125] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 2, pp. 13a, 14c. [126] P. I, Ser. 17, p. 108c.

pected to preserve his old-time devotion and ardor undiminished and undampened. There can be little doubt but that, as regards dishonesty in business transactions, the exaction of high rates of interest on loans, the infringement on the rights of others, exploitation, envy, hate, and similar ethical offences, the unfortunate economic conditions in the diaspora have tended to weaken the moral fibre of the Jew by exposing him to the ruinous temptations of grim necessity. But not all the sins of which we are guilty can be thus accounted for. The free commingling of the sexes in social intercourse, for example; the frequent use of profane and obscene language; the pitiful vanity displayed in dress and in bodily ornamentation; the shocking scenes of irreverence enacted in the synagogue while worship is in progress, when men babble and bluster and behave in a fashion calculated to elicit the ridicule and scorn of the non-Jewish population—shall we lay these shortcomings, too, at the door of "Esau"?[127] We have become an extravagant, luxurious, and pleasure-loving people. Our women are arrayed in dresses embroidered with gold. Precious jewels sparkle as they pass. We frequent theatres and other places of amusement that cannot but degrade the character. Our homes resound with unrestrained hilarity. Shall we ascribe this unreligious temper to the heavy burdens and tragic sorrows of our exile?[128]

At times, the defense of what is reprehensible in our conduct as religious men and heirs to a noble tradition, takes the startling and bizarre form of pseudo-piety. "Thus have our fathers lived and practised," so runs the refrain, "and wherefore shall we introduce changes?" The simplest rejoinder to this species of sophistry can perhaps be best couched in terms of everyday experience: "Why do you relish such beverages as tea, and coffee, and chocolate, which your fathers never

[127] P. II, Ser. 1, p. 1c. [128] P. I, Ser. 1, p, 7d; Ser. 6, p. 43c.

knew the taste of? The fathers did not wear expensive clothes, gold-trimmed robes of silk, to vie with the luxurious habits of princes. They did not dwell in palatial homes, sumptuously furnished and decorated. Yet you enjoy these things, and talk contemptuously of former generations with their rude habitation and quaint attire. You claim that your predecessors were ignorant and foolish, and that you are ever growing in knowledge and experience. But no sooner is the question raised as to the propriety of certain inherited religious customs and practices than you rush to the defense of the past, determined to oppose the slightest change."[129] Of course, we are not at liberty to institute changes in the customary practices of the past, when these emanate from the highest authoritative sources. But when these practices have been marred by heedless adulteration or inapt and unintelligent formulation, or have been made impossible of proper observance by debased social conditions, shall we not rise up to purge them of their impurities and restore to them their original form and effectiveness?[130]

The covenant God made with the fathers imposes on us special obligations. We must strive to excel all others in matters pertaining to religious conduct. For the love God bears for Israel is determined and sustained by the upright life we live.[131] At times, it may appear as if God has long withdrawn His love from us. Are we not in exile, burdened with oppressive cares and unmitigated sorrows? "But let not the rigours of life in the diaspora discourage and distress us; they are productive of much good."[132] For suffering is not always a means of punishment; more often it serves the purpose of arousing one from the spiritual stupor into which his folly has cast him. "When we violently shake a man who has fallen

[129] P. II, Ser. 5, p. 29c; P. I, Ser. 5, p. 39b. [130] P. II, Ser. 5, p. 29d.
[131] אה"י, תולדות, p. 10a. [132] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 2, p. 16d.

into a dead faint, is it our intention to chastise him or to revive him?"[133] Of course, we are much handicapped in the race for economic independence, a condition responsible for some of the gravest offenses in our midst.[134] What was pronounced as a curse, when God said to Adam: "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread," might well be accepted as a great blessing, as far as the masses of our people are concerned. For they sweat aplenty, and yet have to go without the bare necessities.[135] "But it behooves us, my brothers, to submit with proper resignation to the cruel conditions of our exile. We must never surrender our trust in God who will yet rejoice in effecting our deliverance."[136] Let us never forget the truth amply attested to by the authentic events of human history, that the nations who oppressed Israel have suffered extinction. "The Romans who had dispossessed Israel were in turn despoiled and exterminated by the Goths and the Huns. Those who aided Rome in its nefarious undertaking, the Spanish and the British, were later overwhelmed by various barbaric hordes. And who does not know the fate that befell the Babylonians and the Greeks?"[137] Above all, let us ever remember that we still have an important role to play in the spiritual regeneration of the world. Israel has the exceptional opportunity of inculcating upon the human race the cardinal principle of his faith, the absolute unity of God. When a people, though subjected to much pain and scorn, never tires of affirming the truth for which it stands, an enlightened world could not but feel impelled to probe the nature of that truth, and ultimately even to swear allegiance to it. "This is the great light that Israel still radiates in the lands of his dispersion."[138] And to persist in this purpose, to make the one God

[133] P. II, Ser. 11, p. 69c.
[134] P. I, Ser. 1, p. 6d.
[135] אה"י, אלון בכות, p. 118b.
[136] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 2, p. 17a.
[137] ת"י, נצבים, p. 115a.
[138] אה"י, חבא, p. 85c.

regnant in the hearts of all men, we must needs preserve our uniqueness and integrity. We must continue to face the world as a separate and indivisible group. And, such is the peremptory nature of our solidarity, it is only when we stand so linked together as to form an indissoluble union that, as individuals, we take on the character of complete entities. Apart from our fellows, we are only half-units. Joined one to the other, we gain fulness of stature, become complete, well-rounded personalities.[139]

4

As popular preacher, Jonathan Eybeshitz proved to be in possession of powers and resources one rarely associates with the rabbinic authorities of the eighteenth century. The foremost rabbis of the time, so it has been our wont to think, while they might boast of stupendous talmudic erudition, could lay no claim to knowledge derived from alien and secular sources. From this broad generalization, the author of יערות דבש must perforce be excluded. For his sermons reveal a wide familiarity with the popular sciences of the day and an intelligent, if not always sympathetic, understanding of the facts and forces in human development. Thus, in a sermon wherein the relation of diet to human passion is briefly noted, we come upon a detailed description of the process of digestion and the physiological functions and changes involved, that could emanate only from one who was thoroughly conversant with the subject.[140] Statements and observations culled from medical works are often adduced to prove or illustrate a given point in the sermon.[141] Not infrequently, in the course of the development of his theme, the preacher refers to certain astronomical the-

[139] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 9, p. 55c.
[140] אה"י, שופטים, p. 81a.
[141] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 13, p. 82a; ת"י, משפטים, p. 58d.

ories,[142] to some mathematical computations,[143] and to important facts in physical geography.[144] At times he takes occasion to animadvert on the erroneous conclusions of Copernicus and his followers,[145] on some untenable postulates of Aristotle,[146] and on the highly fanciful concepts of the soul as taught by the Pythagoreans.[147] In fact, while deprecating the use of philosophical theories to undermine or weaken faith,[148] Eybeshitz insists that a knowledge of the primary facts of the natural sciences is indispensable to a thorough comprehension of the Torah and the intelligent fulfilment of its laws. Thus, without a knowledge of astronomical calculations, we could have no fixed calendar. Without the science of metrology, we could not know how to define just weights and measures. Physiology aids us to apply with precision the laws pertaining to physical impurity. Pharmacology helps us to understand the nature of the incense compounded for use in the Temple.[149] Even jurisprudence and the laws of political economy, while not always in harmony with divine law, point to the great needs of the state which the custodians of the Torah ought somehow to meet.[150] Surely, physics, unfolding as it does the mystery and wonder of nature's forces, forever proclaims to us the mighty works of God.[151]

Eybeshitz may have been "at home only in the Talmud,"[152] but in many other departments of human thought he was clearly no stranger. He may or may not have wrestled vigorously with the puzzling problems in Jewish philosophy, but

[142] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 7, p. 43c–d; לך לך, ת"י, p. 12c.
[143] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 12, p. 72c. [144] *Ibid.* p. 76c–d; נח, ת"י, pp. 8–9.
[145] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 4, p. 32b; נשא, ת"י, p. 79a.
[146] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 16, p. 95c. [147] נח, ת"י, p. 9a.
[148] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 16, p. 95c.
[149] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 7, pp. 44d–45b.
[150] *Ibid.* [151] *Ibid.* Ser. 16, p. 95c.
[152] *See* Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, X, p. 386.

he was well acquainted with the main works of the medieval Jewish thinkers as well as with those of the exegetes. His sermons abound with references to both classes. On several occasions, he even quotes from Philo,[153] from the apocryphal writings,[154] and from the Koran.[155] He was, in the parlance of our day, a well-read man; and being a skilled preacher, he knew how to utilize the miscellaneous information at his command so as to achieve definite homiletical effects. Indeed, the secret of his great popularity as a preacher lies in just this ability to marshal all his forces, large or small, in full battle array, all the more easily to capture the citadel of the human heart. He reasons and pleads, he cites authorities and relates incidents, he paints graphic pictures and weaves impressive parables, having but one end in view: to kindle conviction, and stir the conscience. Everything else, purity of diction, clearness of outline, symmetry of structure, the whole homiletical framework, he subordinates to this purpose which to him is of paramount importance. Hence, in his homiletical works we shall find not a series of ineffectual disquisitions, replete with exact knowledge and decorated with literary embellishments, but rather a collection of popular pulpit discourses abounding with ethical and spiritual truths, clearly and forcefully, if not always systematically, presented.

Of course, those who view the sermon as a species of literary art will naturally fasten on the stylistic flaws of these sermons. The structure is often loose. The material is not always well organized. The diction is seldom felicitous, often quite crude. The simplest grammatical rules seem at times to command little respect. Rarely is profundity of thought wedded to beauty of expression. As literary compositions, therefore, they fall much below the high standard of craftsmanship attained

[153] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 9, p. 58c; ח"י, בהר, p. 74a.
[154] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 4, p. 35c; P. II, Ser. 9, p. 58c.
[155] אח"י, p. 44a.

by some of his predecessors in the pulpit. But a sermon is more than a solitary self-expression. Essentially, it is a concentrated aim at an immovable mark. And Eybeshitz, whatever the defects in the instrument he wields, never turns his gaze from the fixed target before him, or ever grows unsteady in his aim. If there is any awkwardness in his motions, there is no adulteration in his motives. He means to "win souls." His appeal is largely to the mass-mind, even though the needs of the learned are abundantly satisfied. Hence, he strives for clarity of thought rather than for beauty of expression, for direct and forceful articulation rather than for subtle observation and immaculate presentation.

In nothing perhaps is the singleness of his purpose so clearly manifest as in the utter simplicity of his message and the extreme lucidity with which he unfolds it. However elaborate and intricate the homiletical substructure, the thought built on it cannot but compel the interest of the least cultivated. It is simple in conception, concrete in application. If the framework, moulded of the best material in current use, is the ineluctable concession to the learned, the transparency of the superstructure is doubtlessly a generous compensation for the unlearned. The preacher seems eager to render the truth of his message with its subsidiary lessons into assimilable food for the ordinary intelligence. He states it in terms easily comprehensible, expatiating on every one of its implications; and with the aid of apt analogy, parable, allegory, and other forms of the pictorial art, he transforms into vivid and impressive images ideas otherwise too familiar to excite emotion yet too vital to suffer widespread insensibility. Thus, to add clearness and force to the oft-repeated thought that one's well-being is indissolubly bound up with the welfare and stability of society, and that there can be no security for the individual when the life or health of the group is in jeopardy,

he draws the picture of a prosperous man who engages passage on a well-built boat provided with sumptuous cabins. He enters the cabin assigned to him and inspects its furnishings and equipment with obvious satisfaction, anticipating a safe and pleasurable voyage. But down in the hold, reserved for less fortunate passengers, a group of gay, drunken fellows lie sprawling. In their besotted state, they pay no heed to the dwindling taper in the wooden socket. Presently, the faint flicker turns into a bright flame, slowly eating its way into the frame of the vessel and burning a sizable hole therein. The waves of the sea come rushing in, and the boat begins to flounder and sink. The cabin passenger is startled and bewildered. His own cabin looked so safe and free from all possible danger! Yes, it was perfectly safe. But the boat is more than the cabin; and no passenger on board the most sea-worthy vessel may rejoice in his sense of security as long as there be one compartment not properly safeguarded.[156]

Or, to impress upon the mind of the listener the necessity of banning the spirit of levity from within the precincts of the synagogue, so that the purity of its atmosphere may not be vitiated by heedless and frivolous utterance, he submits the following purely hypothetical but wholly relevant situation. Suppose, if you will, that the congregation decides to have its house of worship remodeled. It engages the services of many men, and in due time the task is completed. The edifice is renovated and beautified. The new decorations add charm and warmth to the old structure. The members, delighted with the improvements, are brimful of joy. But just then some vandal appears and proceeds to bespatter the walls with mud, defacing the beautiful decorations. Imagine the ire this act of wilful destruction and desecration would stir up in the community! And yet, when we use foul language

[156] ירו"ע, P. II, Ser. 9, p. 55b.

in the synagogue, are we not besmirching the purity of the sanctuary, causing the divine spirit to depart from it?[157]

Again, while generally pride is deadly to spiritual growth, there are cases in which humility is more demoralizing than pride. The man groveling in the dust of his lower self, is often the man devoid of self-respect and self-reverence. He is steeped in vulgarity and vice because he is never conscious of his divine origin. Nothing but the realization that he is the child of God, endowed with powers and privileges denied to other creatures, can lift his soul out of the morass of stagnation and moral despair. It is like unto a royal prince whom the king commissions to spend some time among the peasants of the land, not as a member of the royal family but in the guise of a commoner, living their lives and sharing in their struggles. As he is about to depart from the palace to enter upon his strange adventure, he receives from his father the following most solemn admonition. "My son," says the king, "you are about to take up your abode among crude peasants. To identify yourself with their interests and yet retain your cultivated manners and fine dignity will be no easy task. Therefore, every day, in moments of solitude, meditate on your high lineage. Thus, the memory of your noble descent will preserve your spirit from all the vicious influences of your new environment." And, indeed, is not this the chief function of our religion, to engender in us such a sense of human worth as will save us from debasing indulgences?[158]

Or, to give an example or two of a somewhat different character, the power men of prominence enjoy barely compensates for the burdens of responsibility laid upon them. It is told of Augustus Caesar that after he had been proclaimed emperor, he removed the royal crown from his head, placed it on the ground before him, and spoke to it in the following

[157] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 9, p. 65a. [158] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 15, p. 99a.

manner: "O imperial crown! How precious is thy worth! Yet how low bows the head under thy weight! If one only realized the back-breaking tasks thou imposest on the wearer, he would be little tempted to snatch thee, even were the rubbish-heap thy resting-place. For who should care to bear such monstrous burdens?"[159] Again, though the spirit of God is everywhere, His power controlling and pervading the whole universe, the sanctuary dedicated to His name comprises more of His presence, and hence dispenses more of His grace, than any other place. In this respect, it is very much like the sun-glass. The heat and radiance of the sun permeate the atmosphere and fill with warmth and brightness the entire habitable globe. Yet it is the function of the sun-glass to gather up the diffused rays and focus their concentrated heat on one point, often causing a combustible object to ignite.[160]

Though by inclination and training a Kabbalist, whose knowledge and practice of the occult overawed his admirers and provoked his detractors, Eybeshitz seldom sought to mystify his audience with abstruse theories and recondite interpretations. In his preaching, he aimed at tangible results and, in the main, employed nothing but the most practical of means. To be sure, his preoccupation with the mysterious, which colored his theological beliefs and influenced his mental attitudes, could hardly fail to leave some imprint, if only here and there, on his homiletical works. Thus, occasionally he refers to disembodied spirits that people the air and exercise their full power only on dry land.[161] At times he also dilates on the periodic trances of necromancers who induce these roving spirits to enter their prostrate forms and forecast

[159] יהונתן תפארת, קרח, p. 86c.

[160] *Ibid.* p. 89d. For additional examples of the illustrative method *see* אה"י תולדות, p. 11a; יהונתן תפארת, במדבר, p. 77a, *also* עקב, p. 106a; יע"ד P. I, Ser. 7, p. 51a-c; P. II, Ser. 7, pp. 42d, and 45c.

[161] ח"י מצורע, p. 67c; יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 17, p. 98b.

coming events in the hearing of their disciples.[162] Thus, too, he informs us that a man's soul, as concerns its identity in the realms above, assumes the form of certain letters of the alphabet peculiar to its nationality, which naturally only the heavenly representative of that nation can readily decipher; and that a sinful act, effacing as it does some of these symbols, tends to blur, if not wholly to destroy, its distinctiveness in the sight of the angelic hosts.[163] Sometimes, he makes bold to assert that though men of gigantic stature and strength no longer exist, the stories told by the ancients of the numerous exploits of a Hercules, and others like him, are not therefore of legendary character, since it was by means of necromancy that such phenomenal heroes were produced;[164] that the stars and planets are living entities, spiritual personalities, guided in their motions by an inner will and intelligence;[165] that, moreover, the four elements possess in varying degrees spiritual qualities;[166] and that the ethical character of a man is determined by the position of the stars at the moment of his birth, a factor so sure and final that even God must time His actions in harmony with its unalterable effects.[167] But these are only chance, sporadic utterances; they are totally unrelated to his message, which in all instances rests on a rational basis and seeks to compass intelligible ends.

In the exposition of the text he makes scant use of the profundities of the kabbalistic commentators. He refers to them frequently but more for the sake of completeness than for actual illumination, since he takes pains to minimize the importance of their interpretations in the furtherance of his

[162] אה"י, בלק, p. 62a.
[163] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 12, p. 74c.
[164] *Ibid.* P. I, Ser. 4, p. 31a.
[165] *Ibid.* p. 32c.
[166] *Ibid.* P. II, Ser. 16, p. 93c.
[167] *Ibid.* Ser. 10, p. 61b.

purely homiletical purposes.[168] Of course, being a deft homilist, he never fails to find a deeper meaning in the text than the literal interpretation discloses. Like all Jewish preachers who habitually draw their inspiration and support from the Torah, Eybeshitz rests firm in the conviction that scriptural words and phrases are replete with mysterious meanings which, if only to affirm the distinctive character of the Bible, it is our duty to try to fathom.[169] "There is not a verse in Scripture but what lends itself to various interpretations. Hence the utter impossibility of translating the Bible into a foreign tongue without eliminating all but one of the numerous constructions and implications."[170] We err egregiously when we identify biblical narratives with historical records or pleasing poetic tales, of no more than literary significance. Surely, we are not enjoined to read the Book of Esther on Purim only that we may recall some well-known historical events or derive certain aesthetic pleasure. Manifestly, a meaning freighted with mystery and power resides within its pages, which is also of profound ethical and spiritual import.[171] Yet, while imbued with a sense of the unplumbed depths of scriptural thought and expression, for the purpose in hand he ordinarily limits himself to such forms of homiletical exegesis as will best illustrate and confirm the truth of his message and thus help to implant convictions that must transform character.

In fact, Eybeshitz employs homiletical exegesis, even as he makes abundant use of illustrative material, for the purpose of deepening and illuminating the thought of his message. Rarely does he exercise his great homiletical gifts for the mere display

[168] *Ibid.* Ser. 3, p. 17d: ואם כי ישנו בזה דברים עמוקים עד למאוד כמבואר בזהר והאר"י ז"ל כאשר החל לגלות זה הסוד לתלמידו נקנס עליו מיתה כנודע בכתב' מ'מ מה שנוגע לענין תוכחת מוסר בע' פנים לתורה הוא כך.

[169] אה"י, p. 43a. [170] יע"ד, P. I, Ser. 2, p. 13b.

[171] *Ibid.* Ser. 3, p. 20d.

of ingenuity; and only here and there, in the authentic collections of his sermons, does he reflect in his exegesis that total absence of the historic sense, to which the ludicrous anachronisms of an otherwise keen dialectic must be ascribed.[172] Ordinarily, his exposition of the text is distinguished for its simplicity, its freshness, its pointedness, its unique penetration. Thus, the verse: "He hath filled me with bitterness, He hath sated me with wormwood",[173] gains in significance and force when we consider that the essential use of tart ingredients in well-prepared dishes, such as bitter herbs with viands of all sorts and the extract of wormwood in absinth, is not to appease hunger but to stimulate the appetite, to prepare the digestive organs for the banquet to come. Hence, while a modicum of stimulating food may be pleasing and beneficial, it can cause nothing but irritation and disgust when the aroused appetite obtains no other satisfaction than what the substance of the stimulus supplies. So, too, sorrow and tribulation, in moderate measure, will make the lethargic soul eager and alert to partake of the higher satisfactions of life; but such is the tragedy of our life in the diaspora, that we are made to feed to satiety on bitter trials and painful struggles.[174] In the text: "And Jacob called unto his sons, and said: Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the end of days"[175] the significant words are: "gather yourselves together." The prime requisite for a hopeful vision of what shall befall in the end of days is social peace and harmony, unity and solidarity.[176] The simple statement: "And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom:

[172] The attempt to resolve an obscure agadic passage by making Esther adhere to a ritual practice as prescribed by Rabbi Meir while Mordecai chose to follow the decision of the sages, is a typical example of this amazing exegesis —יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 17, p. 96c.

[173] Lam. 3, 15. [174] אה"י, אלון בכות, p. 114a.

[175] Gen. 49,1. [176] אה"י, ויחי, p. 21b.

'Thus said thy brother Israel' "[177] contains, in the last portion of it, a most useful guide to social conduct. "Thus said thy brother Israel"—the erstwhile weak and vacillating Jacob has grown into an unswerving champion of God, proud of the new name he bears, Israel; yet, withal, he openly announces himself as "thy brother." So often men who, when of lowly estate, take pride in their descent and family relations, suddenly assume an air of aloofness and wilful estrangement when either by good fortune or notable achievement they rise to positions of eminence and power.[178]

The thought that the mastery of the Torah entails unlimited personal sacrifices, readily flows from the text: "But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none (wagons and oxen), because the service of the holy things belonged unto them: they bore them upon their shoulders."[179] The ark, symbol of Torah, must be borne upon the shoulders, calls for the immediate, personal service and attachment of the ministrant.[180] The divine pronouncement: "So shall thy seed be"[181] holds more than a promise of numerical strength for the seed of Abraham; it proffers Israel a brief code of social ethics. The stars in the heavenly firmament, though of diverse magnitude and power, form one constellation, the more massive and luminous ones encircling with their radiance those less spacious and effulgent. The stars, though apparently free to speed at will through the limitless expanse of the universe, occupy in reality fixed spheres wherein they perpetually rotate, without ever transgressing their respective boundaries. No star ever encroaches upon the recognized domain of another. Again, numberless as the stars seem to be, they are all needed to maintain the order of the universe. Not a star but that is dowered with the capacity to fulfil some vital function.

[177] Num. 20,14. [178] ת"י, חקת, p. 90d. [179] Num. 7,9.
[180] אה"י, שמיני, p. 44b. [181] Gen. 15,5.

Not a star but whose disappearance would destroy the equilibrium of the universe. Each of them is precious because each plays an important role in the preservation of the whole.[182] When Balaam rapturously exclaimed: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy dwellings, O Israel!"[183] he clearly indicated the chief source of Israel's strength in the past. To dwell in tents meant of necessity to live the simple life, a life free from worry and care and the oppressive burdens of artificial wants. They, the fathers, dwelling in tents, could easily sense the ephemeral nature of worldly ambitions and strivings, could fasten their gaze instead on the serene brightness of the distant stars. Not so the present generation. We build mansions for our habitation. We multiply comforts and luxuries. Hence the feebleness of our physical frame and the dimness of our spiritual vision.[184]

It is not always, however, that Eybeshitz confines his efforts to the broader application of the literal meaning of the text. Frequently, when the phrasing of the original permits, he ventures to deviate from the customary rendition, giving to a single word or phrase a most unexpected turn, such as must force the listener to prick up his ears and share in a newer and more profound understanding of scriptural truth. Thus, in the proclamation of the Psalmist: "I will incline mine ear to a parable; I will open my dark saying upon the harp,"[185] the original version אפתח בכנור חידתי lends itself also to the construction: I will open my dark saying *with* the harp, making the mystery of the harp throw light on the mystery of life. And, indeed, contemplating the secret nature of the harp, the Psalmist may well follow with the self-assuring outburst: "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil?"[186] For is it not the nature of the harp to yield its sweetest music only when

[182] אה"י, לך לך, 5b; יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 7, p. 43d. [183] Num. 24,5.
[184] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 6, p. 46a. [185] Ps. 49,5. [186] Ps. 49,6.

its vibrant strings are subjected to the pressure of the player's hand? And who knows but that the human soul, too, may grow in beauty and power through the chastening of an oppressive environment?[187] So, too, in the text: "And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him,"[188] the structure in the original ולא יכלו דברו לשלם permits also of the interpretation: and they could not speak unto him *so as to restore* peace. Hate flourishes only when the grudge we bear our neighbor gets no airing, is securely locked in the hidden recesses of the heart. But let one unburden himself of his secret grievances, real or fancied, in the presence of the person whom he hates, and a basis for renewed amicable relationships will soon be reached and all former antagonisms forgotten.[189] Likewise, the verse: נפלה לא תוסיף קום בתולת ישראל, which is ordinarily translated to mean: "The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise"[190] may also, by a slight change in accentuation, be made to convey a more hopeful prospect. "She has fallen, she can fall no more; rise up, O virgin of Israel!" When Israel has fallen so low in the pit of misery that he can reach no lower bottom, the rise of his spirit is inevitable. For Israel's spirit never ascends to such heights as when the conditions of his life have touched the lowest depths.[191]

And the same simplicity and insight characterize his exposition of the rabbinic text. For here, too, in the main, his chief concern seems to be not so much with the abstruse utterance of the ancient teachers as with the possible value and significance of their thought in the upward strivings of living men. Thus, for example the puzzling rabbinic dictum that Jewish

[187] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 8, p. 50d. [188] Gen. 37,4.
[189] וישב, ת"י, p. 35d. [190] Am. 5,2.
[191] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 9, p. 59d.

apostates will be proof against the fires of Gehenna because they can boast of as many meritorious deeds as can the pomegranate of seeds,[192] expresses a thought susceptible of much wider application. Surely, an apostate, abandoning his Jewish faith and discipline, can in no sense be described as one whose life abounds in meritorious deeds. Obviously, the teacher responsible for this apparently grotesque statement takes into consideration the mental state of the apostate rather than our Jewish appraisal of his conduct. In our eyes, to be sure, he is a renegade, shut off from those inspirations and practices so essential to the complete religious life. But in his own sight he appears supremely religious. For the perilous step he has taken was dictated, so we are constantly reminded, not by a spirit of rebelliousness but by the urge of firm, even though false, conviction. If he has strayed from the right path, he has never wilfully transgressed the divine commandments. It is just such cases, of which the Jewish camp is full, that are hardest to treat, men who perpetually seek to justify their reprehensible acts on grounds most exalted and holy.[193] Thus, too, the midrashic comment on the phrase "to do righteousness and justice" in the verse: "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice,"[194] to the effect that Abraham while dispensing hospitality to wayfarers demanded of his guests nothing in return, deemed the expense and effort an act of pure righteousness, if they only thanked God for His mercies, but exacted from them full payment for the service rendered, in consonance with the requirements of strict justice, when they declined to utter words of praise and grati-

[192] 'Erub. 19a.—פושעי ישראל שמליאין מצות כרימון.
[193] יע"ד, P. II, Ser. 12, p. 73d.
[194] Gen. 18,19.

tude to God[195]—this highly imaginative interpretation of the rabbis involves the recognition of a truth that is fundamental to all healthy social relationships. Back of the moral life of man, with its labors of love and obligations of service, is the simple notion of God the Father, whose loving children we all are. If vast material possessions be our portion, it can be only that we have been delegated by a wise and merciful Father to provide food and raiment and shelter for those of our brothers who may be lacking these necessary comforts. But banish the thought of God from our lives, subject man's career and destiny to the capricious will of chance, and you have destroyed the sole incentive to acts of brotherly love and care. If there be no heavenly Father and men are not bound each to each by ties of affection and brotherliness, then the demands of justice that each enjoy to the full the gains good fortune has brought him and surrender nothing to the ill-fated and destitute, become inexorable.[196]

[195] Gen. r. ch. 49, 4.

[196] וירא, ת"י, p. 17c. It may be noted here that, while the extreme gravity of the preacher's mood and task precluded the indiscriminate interspersion of humorous comments and observations, in his homiletical exegesis Eybeshitz occasionally injects a lighter element that serves to enliven the stern message, and reveals his own sense of the comic. Thus, for example, in endeavoring to explain the pronouncement of an older teacher that the one who derives his livelihood from the interest on loans will experience no resurrection (Pirke Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 33; Yalkut, Ez. 37), Eybeshitz proceeds to quote the popular saying to the effect, that he who lends money on interest enjoys uninterrupted prosperity because his income grows even while he sleeps. In the day of resurrection, therefore, when this man, too, will begin to stir in anticipation of a fuller awakening, he will be gently admonished not to make the effort, since his wealth will continue to increase even though his sleep be prolonged (י"ע, P. II, Ser. 5, p. 33a). Again, in commenting on the verse: "For the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it" (Lam. 5,18), he says by way of witticism (בדרך הלצה) that the description may well be applied to the modern synagogue, crowded as it is with "foxes," men who conveniently leave their hearts at home not to be disturbed by that organ during the hour of prayer (ק"ש, p. 11b).

5

The most potent voice in the Jewish pulpit immediately preceding the rise of our modern age, Jonathan Eybeshitz, in his thoughts and aims, his achievements and aspirations, bears striking testimony to the abundant vitality of synagogal preaching in the Middle Ages. Densest darkness, we are frequently reminded, comes before brightest dawn; and, in human life and thought, inertia and deadness, impotence and blindness, are the natural forerunners, even as they are the sure causes, of fresh resurgence and renewal. The sermons of Eybeshitz would thus represent the low ebb in the spiritual power and influence of the pre-modern pulpit—an estimate of medieval Jewish preaching altogether too exalted. The new age, with its changed conditions and interests, created a new background for the Jew, different from that of his forebears but neither richer in essential qualities nor more satisfying to the Jewish soul. Necessity, parent of many inventions, need not fortify its respectability with assumed virtues. The new generation, who knew not the sources of Judaism, could derive little delight, even as they could gather no intelligible meaning, from the homiletical subtleties and complexities of an earlier day. A new form of address, more readily comprehensible because more closely akin to other types of formal discourse, made its appearance in the pulpit, different from that which the fathers had learned to love but in substance no richer and of promising results not more fruitful. To be sure, older forms, when unhelpful and unappealing, must submit to great changes or retreat from the ever-shifting scenes of life; and the medieval sermon, despite the superb role it played in the life of the fathers, had to undergo a complete transformation to retain its influence in the modern Synagogue. Yet, and this is of paramount significance, no preacher

of the newer school, not a Salomon or Kley, not even a Plessner or Jellinek who strove to preserve something of the flavor, if not of the form, of the older sermon, ever manifested in his preaching that intense purposefulness, that prophetic earnestness, that undivided devotion to the ideals of the spirit, which we find so impressively portrayed in the antiquated but ever-stimulating sermons of Jonathan Eybeshitz.

IX.

CONCLUSION

Lessons From The Past

SHORT of a chronological history of Jewish preaching in the Middle Ages, no homiletical study of the period could really satisfy those who search for the minutest details in any historical or literary investigation. They would rather know many of its parts than have an intelligent comprehension of the subject as a whole. Yet, the knowledge that yields insight and understanding is seldom won from the exhaustive accumulation of mere facts. The work and achievements of a single outstanding personality will often disclose the character of an age more fully than all the tread-mill labors of mediocre minds. Especially is this true in the realm of preaching, where the urgency of the "call" may quite as often be conditioned by pressure from without as by compulsion from within; what purports, therefore, to be the creative impulse generated by the vital currents of the day, may be only the shrewd accomodation to the superficial tastes and habits of individual groups. Under such circumstances, it is in the utterances of men divinely appointed for their task, not in the pronouncements of the professional preachers, that we shall find an authentic revelation of the life and spirit of a given age. Not the panicky shouts from the lowlands, but the trumpet-signals from the high tower, reflect accurately the swaying fortunes of an embattled city.

Our study of the sermon in the medieval Synagogue, limited as it is to the labors and accomplishments of the representative preachers, is admittedly eclectic in character and

therefore historically incomplete. These obvious limitations of our plan, however, have aided, rather than marred, the broad purpose we had in view. A literature is best judged by the best work of its creative artists. It is a sign of our generosity, rather than a tribute to our critical faculty, when in the study of any literature we include works of little merit. The pursuit of the antiquary, good enough as a present pastime, falls short as a criterion of past values.

From the best preaching of the period, as exemplified in the homiletical products of the most celebrated preachers, we sought to derive our understanding of the nature of the Jewish sermon in the Middle Ages. That feebler voices, and more confused messages, were only too frequently heard in the medieval synagogue, the most cursory glance at the numerous homiletical efforts still extant will demonstrate quite conclusively. But to burrow one's self beneath the mass of debris left by disorganized minds and shout from thence words of disparagement and detraction, as many have chosen to do, remaining all the while unaware of the stately edifices reared by the master-builders of the age, is to be guilty of self-inflicted blindness. The inferior specimens exist to heighten the value, not to hide the finer quality, of the superior. The shallow sand-bar along the shore is no true gauge of the ocean's depth.

At its best, the sermon in the medieval Synagogue, we must have noted, stands forth as the unfinished product of a never-ending evolutionary process. At no time do we see it stationary; at no time do we find it fully unfolded. It began early enough to have been indebted to no one but the Synagogue for its primary ingredients; it ended, or rather ascended the height of its development, as debtor to all the forces and fashions of a growing civilization. From a simple homily, it grew into an elaborate address, borrowing many of the graces

of its form and much of the weight of its content from books, old and new, secular and sacred, and from the recognized models of oral expression, current and ancient, Jewish and Christian. The static character of the medieval Jewish sermon, steadily insisted on in some quarters, seems to rest on nothing more substantial than personal fancy.

It is equally evident that the preaching of the time was neither spasmodic, nor perfunctory, nor shallow: that all through the Middle Ages, wherever good preaching was available, the pulpit played an important role in the religious education of the people; that the preacher, when to the manor born, was thoroughly alive to the vexing social questions of the day; and that the sermon, as moulded by the great masters, was compounded of the most vital elements in Jewish thought and doctrine. To be sure, differences as to method obtained among the most consecrated of preachers. Some of them frankly frowned upon the pointed, tempestuous exhortations of the passionate pleader. They counseled the use of a more persuasive, because more gentle, approach. To compel obedience, they felt, one must first kindle conviction. But, in all instances, however divergent the method, the purpose of their preaching was truly prophetic. In many cases, they deemed themselves the legitimate successors of the ancient prophets, who cried aloud and spared not. Even when passionately urging the proper observance of ritual law, a plea held by some as foreign to the prophet's purpose, they were impelled by a spirit unmistakably prophetic. For theirs was the conviction that ritual conformity, as well as moral integrity, was essential to the religious plan of right-living. To them, even as to the prophets, righteousness, the goal of pure religion, presupposed, as primary condition of its attainment, the right disposition of the soul toward the ethical obligations of life. And it was in the rites of Judaism that they

perceived a most potent educational discipline, one that was fully capable of refining the cruder elements of our nature and keeping our minds steadily fixed on the high tasks and purposes of the spirit. The notion that the modern outcry for prophetic preaching denotes a revolt from the ritual absorption of the medieval pulpit, clearly springs from misinformation or confused thinking. Some may, in most emphatic manner, disavow any reliance on ritual as an aid to spiritual living, but they cannot, without impugning the rationality of their judgment, deny spiritual motivation to those who repose confidence in the efficacy of an inherited and time-tested discipline. Priest and prophet—these are names not of opponents but of coworkers. The plan of the prophet, the priest sought to execute. He aimed high, even when he missed the mark. In the case of the medieval preacher, it is not at all certain that he really failed of his main purpose, or that his failure, whatever its nature, was due to the perpetual insistence on ritual regularity. The modern religious teacher, unhampered by outlandish code or cult, has yet few trophies to show for his triumphs.

If we attach any historical significance to the literary records of the past, then we must disabuse our minds of a number of erroneous impressions. One is at a loss to know, for example, how the impression, widely current in our day, that in the Middle Ages the voice of the preacher could be heard only on a few special occasions, really originated. The careers of the great preachers and the actual sermons they preached offer most glaring testimony against such a baseless assumption. Nor is it easy to account for the impression, prevalent among certain classes of liberals, that the life of the medieval Jew was steeped in ritualism, and that the contemporaneous pulpit, whenever it made its influence felt, only helped to accelerate the decline of pure religion. The mere suggestion of

such a thought must fill the reader of the preceding chapters with righteous indignation. To be sure, symbolic practices and ceremonial observances, ever forming an integral part of the religious discipline of the Jew, claimed the attention of the devotee of Judaism in the Middle Ages, even as the ethical and spiritual ideals of his religion sought to engage his powers and interests. That the pressure from either direction proved at times powerless to overcome his inertia, or quell his rebelliousness, the sermons of the noted preachers clearly indicate. The "fathers" were not always the loyal and devoted followers of the faith they cherished. At times, they chafed under the yoke of the commandments, in the spirit and fashion of their latest offspring. Thus, they spurned the phylacteries on occasion, and not infrequently violated the sanctity of the Sabbath day, as if bent on mitigating the misconduct of their descendants in the future. They also engaged from time to time in unethical practices. They labored for personal gain, heedless of the wrong inflicted on others. Their shortcomings seem to have been as numerous and as serious as those of our own. But the preachers of the time were in no mood to overlook or condone their misdeeds. They fearlessly reproved the "fathers" for their known sins and failings, even as a more generous posterity still proudly exalts them for their no less real virtues. Above all, to fortify their spirit against temptation and defection, these preachers employed all the erudition and skill at their command. They labored mightily to impress the people with the grandeur of their faith: to prove the cogency of its theological claims, the superiority of its ethical thought, the unsurpassed power and dignity of its plan for daily living. If such preaching be futile or inadequate, then all virtue has departed from the spoken word.

The student who approaches the products of the medieval pulpit with unbiased judgment, with no imaginary foes to

overcome, no vulnerable theories to protect, will soon be forced to conclude that despite the facile way in which we have learned to divide time and classify men, there are few immovable bars, and no fixed labels, in the spacious halls of our long past. Jewish life in the Middle Ages—how different from our own the external conditions surrounding it, and yet how identical with our own the difficulties, the burdens, the problems facing it! The inner life of the Jew, ever moulded by the principles and outlook of his religion, and for these many centuries set in a political and social milieu of little variability, seems to follow a uniform pattern. And so, the panorama of Jewish life unfolded in these sermons is strikingly similar to the one we gaze upon in our own time: the same tenacity of purpose, coupled at times with the cold indifference and infidelity of the backslider; the same bitterness bred by persecution, joined with a passionate love of imitation; the same fierce pride, accompanied by a pathetic self-depreciation; the same struggle for survival, and the same barriers to self-realization; the same sorrows and frustrations, the same faith and hope. Call it medieval, call it modern, the picture is the same, however different the outer frame. Neither the external pressure, nor the internal confusion, has materially changed. The eternal pilgrim, still on the march, finds no rest and knows no peace of soul. May it not be that it is these very similarities and recurrences which make of the past the supreme teacher that it is? Of what value would the medieval sermon be to us today, if it could not throw light on our own problems and perplexities? Indeed, it is only when we cease to disparage and denounce the worthy efforts of the past, and seek to find in them parallel situations and lines of action, rather than striking points of departure, that we can at all profit by the lessons of the past.

Confronted by conditions of life not dissimilar to those of

our own, the medieval preacher met the challenge of the hour with speedy determination and intuitive understanding. He set out not to solve problems but to strengthen character, not to smite the enemy but to build up the resistance of the victim. He could not hope to change the world, but he might generate in weak hearts such powerful currents as would enable them to endure the world's harshness. A small group, he knew, could best preserve its identity in a hostile environment, not by spectacular defiance, but by quiet determination, not by outer aggression, but by inner conviction. If ignorance and disorder reigned within the Jewish camp, it were folly, he felt, to take note and vociferously complain of the menacing gestures of unfriendly groups. If the Jew spurned the strength that came from his religion, his survival among the nations, even when miraculously secured, held no promise of universal redemption. Accordingly, the earnest preacher of the time set himself the task of implanting Jewish knowledge and Jewish virtue in the consciousness of his people. He sought to dispel ignorance, to bring enlightenment, to teach the law of truth and of duty, to foster a spirit of faith and of reverence; to instil piety and hope, dignity and courage, into hearts that seemed to falter. That in face of extraordinary odds the Jew succeeded in emerging from the Middle Ages with spirit unbroken and vigor unabated, may have been due in some measure to the vision, the insight, the consecrated labors of the popular teachers.

In the special field of homiletics, no less than in the sphere of individual and social behavior, the situation that faced the medieval preacher was charged with difficulty and possible danger; but here, too, he stood the test, meeting the trials peculiar to his vocation with courage, foresight, and intelligence. For he was not long in discovering that his pulpit equipment was inadequate for the complicated tasks thrust

upon him. The tools he had received from his predecessors, effective though they proved to be in an earlier age, appeared now somewhat worn and altogether too scanty for his manifold needs. A new age, a more diversified life, was in the making then as now. New tastes, new modes of thought, new forms of expression, had already made their appearance, sure precursors of greater changes yet to come. His problem was quite real and pressing. Should he resist the new currents, or follow them to an uncertain destination? Should he refuse to submit to any changes, holding fast to his ancient modes and methods; or should he yield wholeheartedly to the allurements of the new and the novel, abandoning to their fate the old forms and instrumentalities? In either horn of the dilemma lurked danger and sure defeat. The medieval preacher, fortunately, declined to make the perilous choice. He sought to find another alternative, one that would solve his problem without nullifying the results of his past experiences. Why not add to the old, he asked himself, what is best in the new? Why not take hold of the one, and yet withdraw not the hand from the other? If in the store of new knowledge there are elements we may treasure, they will lose none of their properties when amalgamated with the older ingredients. Nor could the quality of the older material suffer deterioration because cast in a newer mould. And so, he wedded the new to the old, and thus achieved a harmony and an efficiency that served well the needs of his age, and insured at the same time the uninterrupted continuance of former lines of development.

The chief merit of the medieval preacher, then, lay in his vision and moderation. He saw clearly and acted prudently. When evil forces, hard to conquer, threatened the existence of his people, he had the insight to perceive that self-preservation could more readily be achieved through self-discipline

and self-mastery than through bold self-assertion and ostentatious self-pity. When collision of the new with the old shook his sense of self-sufficiency and upset the routine of his habits and methods, he had the wisdom to preserve his mental equilibrium, striving for conciliation and adjustment instead of pursuing extremes. Attached to the old, he yet learned much from the new. He borrowed freely from all sources, but would not be swallowed up by his creditors. He remained what he had always wished to be, a teacher of Torah.

The Jew was late in emerging from the Middle Ages. For him, the French Revolution marked the close of one era and the beginning of another. A new spirit then began to permeate the peoples of Europe; and the Jew, too, felt its impact and, sooner or later, rejoiced in its benefits. The dawn of a new day had broken upon his horizon, ushering in the age of liberty and enlightenment, the modern age. How did the preachers of the newer period meet the challenge of the times? What were the principles that guided them in the solution of their problems? Given the task of adjusting the past to the present, did they utilize, or totally reject, the wisdom, the experience, of the masters of an earlier day?

An analytical study of the sermons of the representative preachers of the new age should afford us the enlightenment we seek.

INDEXES

Index of Biblical Passages, PAGE 381

Index of Rabbinical Passages, PAGE 384

Index of Texts, PAGE 387

Index of Subjects, PAGE 389

INDEX OF BIBLICAL PASSAGES

GENESIS

2,10 164
2,24 311
3,6 73
3,19 19
3,22 250
4,3 246
5,1 42
6,9 326
8,21 162
12,1 13
12,5 17
15,5 362
17,1 27
18,19 365
22,11 146
24,2 308
34,1 15
37,4 364
41,39 246
49,1 361

EXODUS

2,11–12 248
3,1 33
3,5 308
13,17 10
13,21 18
15,1 21
15,3 162
15,26 74
17,8 21
19,3 17
20,12 74
24,7 12
24,7 220
32,32 105
38,21 18
40,34 26

LEVITICUS

1,1 11
1,14 255
18,5 10
19,10 42
23,40 20

NUMBERS

7,9 362
9,14 42
11,12–13 160
12,7 18
20,14 362
20,14 149
21,21 149
24,5 363
31,1 26

DEUTERONOMY

2,24 149
4,39 77
5,22 12
6,4 13
6,5 109
6,7 15
15,7–10 150
17,9–10 80
20 165
22,8 311
30,14 109
30,15 151
31,10–13 6

JUDGES

7,5 158
14,4 7

I SAMUEL

9,8 249

II KINGS
23,1–2 6

ISAIAH
1,22 211
1,27 110
14,8 14
34,16 49
43,22 25
58,5 70
60,21 253

JEREMIAH
2,2 259
2,35 247
16,11 17
31,37 269

EZEKIEL
18,27 73

HOSEA
6,6 70

AMOS
5,2 364

HABAKKUK
2,3 269

MICAH
6,7 20

HAGGAI
1,13 11

ZECHARIAH
7, 5 70

PSALMS
1,3 28
7,15 30
10,13 265
12,9 25
19,5 147
38,10 116
40,2 221
40,10 92
49,5 363
49,6 363
49,13 205
51,19 251
62,12 310
62,13 252
80,9 23
85,12 308
92,8,13 157
92,14 247
103,20 11
116,10 309
116,15 156
120,3–4 22
139,1 345
143,10 263
145,11–12 71
145,16 16

PROVERBS
2,4–5 156
2,18 16
3,3 72
3,18 20
11,22 308
11,30 20
12,10 108
15,31 234
17,17 247
21,19 164
24,26 108

JOB
12,12 248

SONG OF SONGS
3,1 256

RUTH
1,14 212

LAMENTATIONS
3,15 361

ECCLESIASTES
1,3 271
3,19 309
3,21 110
5,14 32
7,1 22

ECCLESIASTES
9,7 34
9,8 28

ESTHER
8,2 107

NEHEMIAH
8,1–8 6

I CHRONICLES
12,33 233

INDEX OF RABBINICAL PASSAGES

MEKILTA

Bo. 1 . . . . . 26, 40
Besh. 1 . . . . . 10, 19
Besh. 2 (p. 56) 309
Besh. 4 43
Jeth. 1 41
Jeth. 2 40
Jeth. 4 43
Jeth. 6 39
Jeth. 9 41

SIFRA

Aḥ. Mot, 13 . . . . . 11, 42
Kedosh. 4 42
Emor, 17 92

SIFRÉ

Behaal. 71 42
Ekeb, 49 41
Haaz. 57 36
Haaz. 306 43
Haaz. 312 45
Haaz. 323 42

RABBOT

GENESIS R.

3,4 40
9,7 44
11,6 41
13,2 43
20,10 20
24,7 42
30,9 . . . . . 28, 326
39,14 18
41,1 43
41,9 45
44,12 27
49,4 366
55,1 326
64,10 32
83,5 30

EXODUS R.

2,2 33
15,22 40
19,4 42
25,3 16
26,2 22
28,2 17

EXODUS R.

31,15 26
42,9 45

LEVITICUS R.

1,1 12
3,1 26
4,8 40
9,9 37
23,5 45
25,1 16
25,3–4 40
27,6 15
28,1 40
33,1 25
34,3 44
36,2 23

NUMBERS R.

8,2 42
17,5 44
19,16 149

CANTICLES R.
3,9 5

RUTH R.
5,4 217

LAMENTATIONS R.
Peth. 1 17
Peth. 10 25
1,8 211

ECCLESIASTES R.
5,14 32
9,7 35
9,8 28

PESIKTA
p. 2a, 17a 45
p. 46b 43
p. 101b 36
p. 103a 43
p. 108b 45
p. 116a 35
p. 185a 21

PESIKTA R.
Chap. 5 26
Chap. 10 45

TANḤUMA
Beresh. (B), 12 39
Noah, 2 20
Leḥ Le. 1 14
Vayish. 6 16
Vayak. 1 22
Peku. (B), 4 18
Mat. 3 27
Deba. 3 42
Bera. 7 44

TANA D. ELIYAHU
Chap. 1 43
Chap. 2 47
Chap. 3 28

PIRKE RABBI ELIEZER
Chap. 37 366

MID. TEHILIM
7,11 31
17,8 43
120,4 22

MID. TEMURAH
p. 113 (Jell.) 39

YALKUT
Vayak. 408 92
Ezek. 37 366

ZOHAR
Besh. 60a 39
Jeth. 87a, 90b 39
Mishp. 24a 39
Pinḥ. 246a 106
(Ḥad. Cant. 120) 106
Lik. Amarim, 23, 28 . . . 39
Ket. Shem Tob, pt. 2, p. 3 . 39

MISHNAH AND TALMUD
Ber. 3a 256
Ber. 17a 255
Peah (J), 16a 98
Shab. 119b 166
Erub. 19a 365
Yom. 7, 1 5
Bez. 16a 113
R. H. 16b 72
Taan. 2a 5
Taan. 8a 255
Meg. 4, 4 7
Meg. 3a 92
Ḥag. 5b 211
Ḥag. 12b 75
Yeb. 109b 113
Ned. 39b 151
Sot. 7, 7–8 5
Nid. 17a 167

MISHNAH AND TALMUD

Sot. 40a 36
B.B. 145a 36
San. 10, 1 253
San. 34a 192
Abot, 11, 1 72
Abot, 111, 20 72
Abot, V, 13 75
Beḥor. 8b 206
Tam. 28a 98
Nid. 17a 167

INDEX OF TEXTS

BIBLICAL

GENESIS

2,10 164
3,6 73
3,19 19
3,22 250
4,3 246
8,21 162
12,1 13
12,5 17
15,5 362
17,1 27
22,1 146
24,2 308
34,1 15
37,4 364
41,39 246
49,1 361

EXODUS

2,11–12 248
3,1 33
3,5 307
13,17 10
13,21 18
15,1 21
15,3 162
15,26 74
17,8 21
19,3 17
20,12 74
24,7 220
32,32 105
38,21 18
40,34 26

LEVITICUS

1,1 11
18,5 10
23,40 20

NUMBERS

7,9 362
11,12–13 159
20,14 . . . . . 149, 362
24,5 363
31,1 26

DEUTERONOMY

6,4 267
6,5 109
6,7 15
22,8 311
30,14 109
30,15 151
30,19 158

JUDGES

7,5 158

I SAMUEL

9,7 249

ISAIAH

1,22 211
1,27 110
11,9 246
40,26 332
43,22 25
58,5 70

JEREMIAH

2,2 259
2,35 247
16,11 17

EZEKIEL

18,27 73

HOSEA
6,6 70

AMOS
5,2 364

ZECHARIAH
7,5 70

PSALMS
7,15 30
10,13 265
15,2 210
40,2 221
49,5 363
51,19 251
62,12 310
62,13 252
69,29 72
80,9 23
85,12 308
92,14 247
92,8,13 157
105,3 265
116,10 309
120,3–4 22
120,7 252
130,1 345
143,10 263
145,11–12 71

PSALMS
145,16 16

PROVERBS
2,4–5 156
3,18 16
11,22 308
11,30 20
12,10 108
15,27 111
17,17 247
20,13 111
21,19 164
24,26 108

JOB
12,12 248

CANTICLES
3,1 256

LAMENTATIONS
3,15 361

ECCLESIASTES
1,3 271
3,19 309
3,21 110
7,1 22
9,7 34
9,8 34

RABBINICAL

Abot I, 1 309
Abot II, 1; III, 20 72
San. 10, 1 253
Mek. Besh. 309
Gen. r. 30,9 326
Gen. 4. 49,4 365
Gen. r. 55, 1 146
Lev. r. 1,14 252
Lev. r. 35,6 254
Lam. r. 1,8 211
Ruth, r. 5,4 217
Yalk. Ez. 37 366

Ber. 3a 256
Ber. 17a 255
Shab. 119b 166
Erub. 19a 365
Bez. 16a 113
R.H. 16b 72
Ta'an. 8a 255
Ḥag. 12b 75
Yeb. 109b 113
Ned. 39b 151
B.B. 16b 312
Nid. 17a 167

INDEX OF SUBJECTS

Abba Taḥna, and the leper, legend of, illustrating act most acceptable to God, 34–35.

Abraham ben Ḥiyya, 96.

Abravanel, Isaac, 258.

Abudarham, containing references to Anatoli's sermons, 56.

Acrostic, the, use of in later piyuṭim, condemned as reeking with vanity, 183.

Adret, Abraham, 89.

Agada, the, role of, in mental life of Jew, vii.

Agricola, Rudolph, 201.

Al-Farabi, *Treatise on Syllogism* of, 54.

Al-Fargani, *Elements of Astronomy* of, 54.

Albert the Great, gave impetus to scholastic preaching in Church, 141–142.

Albo, criticism of, for doing violence to syntax in interpretation of scriptural verse, 201.

Alexander Aphrodisias, 134.

Alexander the Great, and eagle, legend of, 207.

Algazali, 134.

Alkmaeon, tragic career of, illustrating danger of making fear motive of conduct, 169.

Allegory, the, as illustration, 29–31; examples of: Falsehood and Curse, mated in Noah's Ark, 30–31; wheat, chaff and stubble in controversy, 30; as form of scriptural interpretation, 66, 68; examples of, characters: Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, Naomi, Ruth and Orpah, 212; objects: Ark, Table, Menorah, Altar, Laver, 257; parapet on roof of new house, 311; watchmen of city, 256; three watches of night, 256–257; four species for Feast of Succoth, 213; broken mortar and thread of sand, 211.

Almagest, Ptolemy's, 54, 265.

Alphabetical order, arrangement of biblical verses in, attesting to authentic character of work, 183.

Amusements, popular, breeding frivolity and evil, 85, 125, 339.

Analogy, the, as species of illustration, 25–26, 171; examples of: boat owner and builder, 204; skilled artisan and perfect instrument, 205; roar of waterfall, Ibid.; milk in mother's breast, 259; wife and recent bride, Ibid.; child with toy, and passing stranger, 313; restoration of broken friendship, Ibid.; inferior material and exterior decoration, Ibid.; generals in service of king, 337; vandals and decorated wall, 356; fast galloping steed and slow-trotting nag, 171.

Anatoli, Jacob, life of, 52–56; character of sermon, 51–52; theory of preaching, 58–66; exegetical method, 66–76; outlook and message, 77–87; conception of universality of human knowledge, 62–64; opposition to talmudic dialectics, 62; place in evolution of sermon, 88.

Anthropomorphism, in Bible, rationalized, 71–72, 78–79, 104–105.
Anton, Carl, *Kurze Nachricht von dem Falschen Messias Shabbethai Zebi*, 320–323.
Apfelbaum, Abba, 194, 231, 232.
Apocrypha, 134, 354.
Apostates, Jewish, in Spain, tragic plight of, 187–188.
Arama, Isaac, life of, 134–139; works, 136–138; theory of preaching, 142, 154–156; framework of sermon, 143–144; homiletical exegesis, 154–168; "investigation," 145–153; "exposition," 153–154; illustrative material and method, 169–173; exhortation, 151; qualities of style, 168–169; mental range, 144–145; outlook and message, 176–190; attitude to Kabbalah, 184–185; influence of sermons, 133–134, 136; contribution to homiletics, 190–191.
Arama, Meir, 139.
Aramaic, vernacular, the, and reading from Law in Synagogue, 6.
Aristocracy, produced, when reason alone emphasized, 268.
Aristotle, *Ethics* of, 134, 142; *Metaphysics*, 134, 353.
Asceticism, foreign to Jewish teachings, 83–84, 335–336.
Asklepiades, 201.
Assemblies, early devotional, 5.
Astronomy, Elements of, Al-Fargani, 54.
Authors, using inventions not their own, 240.
Averroes, 54, 90, 201.
Azariah dei Rossi, 195.

Baḥya, ben Asher, life of, 89–91; theory of preaching, 96–98; structure of sermon, 128–129; exegetical method, 104–111; illustrative method, 113–116; stylistic qualities, 114; aim as preacher, 101; exposition of Judaism, 118–128; treatment of social wrongs, 98; ritual laxity, 99–101; resorting to civil courts, 99; emphasis on religious education for youth, 102; characterization, 117; contribution to homiletics, 94–95, 128–129.
Baḥya, ben Joseph, 90, 116, 201, 258, 276.
Believer, and mere thinker, 177–178.
Benjamin of Tudela, *Travels* of, 134.
Beretaro, Samuel Minzi, 195.
Berliner, A., *Targum Onkeles*, 8.
Bernstein, Bela, 90, 91.
Bible, the, as viewed and used by early preachers, 37; authoritative, even when support inconclusive, 69; citations from, as illustrations, 23–24; more significant than secular literature, 224; impossible to translate more than one meaning of, 360.
Bill of divorcement, Jewish, sought by wife of apostate husband, 188.
Body, the human, sanctity of, 44, 123.

Books, and spoken word: former, valuable for information; latter, for generating emotional response, 234.
Borrows, one creature from other, yet nature's harmony unbroken; man borrows from brother, to be despoiled in process, 26.
Breit, Ḥayyim, 96, 99, 103.
Business, dishonesty in, and economic conditions in diaspora, 349.

Caesar, Augustus, and the crown, legend of, 358.
Calendar, the Jewish, numbers days of week, instead of naming them, reason why, 125.
"Call," external pressure and inner compulsion, 369.
Call, God's, comes only to those ready to receive it, 11.
Cantors, disparagement of, 301, 302, 346.
Card-playing, evils of, 85, 339, 340.
Casket, the, for dead, utilizing boards of table in making of, 126.
Catholic reaction, effect on life of Jew, 230.
Celibacy, of clergy, incongruous character of, 84.
Ceremonies, religious, function of, 125.
Chance, and Providence, 332; man, not helpless creature of, 333.
Chance, believer in, like bird imagining net spread out, not by hunter, but by chance, 114–115.
Character, attack on defamation of, 289.
Child, the, growth in motivation of, exemplifies relationship of material to spiritual, 115.
Christians, reverence of, for Bible, 185.
Church, attendance of, by Spanish Jews, 134–135.
Cicero, outline of, for oratorical composition, 196, 201, 239.
Citations, biblical, for illustrative purposes, 23–24; authoritative, even when support weak, 69.
Cock, sacrifice of, at Socrates' burial, allegorical meaning of, 212.
Collections, midrashic, 9–10.
Comforts, material, not always dispensed by God, but true desire always satisfied, 16.
Community, the, and emissary to palace of king, parable of, to illustrate life of Jew who forgets "mission," 172.
Compliance with Law, not met by routine performance, 82.
Computation, messianic, frowned upon, 185.
Conclusion, sermonic, structure and content of, 173–174, 214–215; early form, 35.
Conformity, ceases to be virtue when sunk into insensibility, 81.
Conformity, ritual, and right-living, 371.
Contentment, wisdom of, expressed in aphorism: "If one cannot get what he wants, he ought to want what he can get," 85.
Controversy, Emden-Eybeshitz, 322–323.

Conversion, forced, raising theological question, 188.
Copernicus, 353.
Courts, civil and Jewish, 99.
Creation, God's, attesting divine origin of Torah, 118.
Crescas, 134, 201.
Critic, literary, function of, x.
Curse, and falsehood, fable of, to illustrate unprofitable character of dishonest accumulation, 30–31.
Custom, popular, to set wedding-day at time of full moon, 126–127.

Danaus, and sieve, poetic legend of, to illustrate futility of work of philosophers, 207.
Dancing, incompatible with religious spirit, 85; device of evil inclination, 339.
Dark Ages, the, limitations of term, viii; duration of, for Jew, 337, viii.
Darshan, the, chief task of, 9.
Dayanim, method of selecting, condemned, 289; criticized for lack of interest in spiritual welfare of community, 329.
Democracy, spiritual, aim of Judaism, 268.
Desires, crude, when divested of, man ascends Godward, 222.
Devotion, in prayer, 301.
Dialectics, talmudic, barren of results, 295; baneful effects of, 62–63, 317–318.
Dietary laws, spiritual discipline, not health measures, 181; meant to protect blood from ferocious nature of beast, Ibid.
Dispersion, the, tragedy of, spiritual more than physical, 333; divine purpose of, 186; effects on life of people, 292.
Dor Dor Vedorshov, Weiss, I. H., 135.
Drashah, the, meaning and purpose of, 9; contrasted with "sermon," 56.
Duties, religious, to be performed with joy, 344.

Earth, the, glory of Israel sinks to, when Book let fall to ground, 211.
Education, religious, need of, 102; proper methods of, 296.
Ehrentheil, Moritz, 320.
Eisenstadt, Meir, 320.
Emancipation, political and spiritual, 187.
Emden, Jacob, 322.
End, and means, in religion, 70–71.
Engagement, festivity attending, to terminate at ten o'clock, 340.
Environment, and individual power, 277–278, 325–326; influences of rural and urban, 124; to be rescued from unfavorable, one must prove superior to it, 13.
Equality, human, posited in Judaism, 86.
Erudition, men of much, need no testimonials of ordination, 313.
Ethics, and religion, 220, 263–264.

Ethics, Aristotle's, 142; may kindle its lights beside candelabra of Torah, Ibid.
Example, the use of in preaching, 24–25.
Exegesis, homiletical, rational basis for, 155; classification of early methods, 15–23; later methods, 108–111, 210–211; allegorical style of, 66–69, 163–167, 256–257; technical approach, not goal, 36.
Exhortation, need of, 98, 234; defence of, 327–328; unpopularity of, 283–284; opposition to, 371; inferior to positive instruction, 203–204.
Existence, chief purpose of, 179.
Existence, individual, justification for, found in service of others, 220.
Exposition, methods of, 15.
Expounder, the homiletical, chief aim of, 16.
Eybeshitz, Gabriel, 325.
Eybeshitz, Jonathan, life of, 320–323; works, 321, 323–325; secular learning, 352–354; theory of preaching, 326–332; exegesis, 359–366; illustrative method, 355–358; literary style, 354–355; outlook and message, 330–352; sense of comic, 366; influence of Kabbalah on sermons, 358–359; ordinances, 340; spirit of sermons, 368.
Ezra, and reading from Law, 5, 6.

Fable, the, illustrative use of, 31–32.
Faith, nature of, 121; conventional and personal, 174–175; and obedience, 266; only simpleton will invoke, when further exploration indicated, 176.
Falk, Joshua, 321.
Falsehood, and Curse, fable of, to illustrate unprofitable character of dishonest accumulation, 30–31.
Faust, admonition of, to Wagner, would-be-preacher, 277.
Fear, as motive of conduct, 169.
Feast of Weeks, reason for use of milk and honey on, 68.
Fellowman, love of, physical and spiritual aspects of, 330–331.
Festival, religious, feast-day of soul, 182.
Figo, Azariah, life of, 231–232; reaction to Renaissance, 227–231, 240–241; theory of preaching, 233–236; structure of sermon, 239–245; hortatory method, 236–239; exegesis, 245–257; allegorical method, 256–257; illustrative material and method, 258–260; conclusion of sermon, 260–261; outlook and message, 261–272; temper of sermons, 230–231; literary style, 244; contribution to homiletics, 231, 272.
Form, outer, and inner content, 318.
Fox, the, and vineyard, fable of, to illustrate inevitability of leaving material possessions behind, in hour of death, 32.
Frederick II, patron of learning, 54; makes exegetical suggestions to Anatoli, Ibid.
Freedom, love of, innate in man and beast, 259.
Friedmann, M., *Onkeles*, 8.

Future-state, allegorization of, deprecated, 122.
Future, the vision of, conditioned by solidarity and harmony, 361.

Galenus, 201.
Gaming-table, as form of amusement, condemned, 85.
Garden of Eden, rabbinic conception of, foreshadowed in Scriptures, 122.
Geometry, Euclid's, 265.
Gerondi, Jonah ben Abraham, 89, 103.
Gerondi, Nissim ben Reuben, 136.
Gersonides, 134.
Glass, breaking of, at festive gatherings, 126.
God, conception of, 39–40, 76–79, 262–263; belief in, through reason and revelation, 39; as Creator and moral personality, 39–41; as Creator and Savior, 121; proofs for existence of, rational and revealed, 39; faith in, 120; fear of, 121; love of, 121; imitation of qualities, 40–41; consciousness of, essential to ethical life, 333–335; knowledge of, way to find Him, 121; Nature and, 78; union with, 220–222; unity of, in Christianity, Mohammedanism, and Judaism, contrasted, 262; unity of, testifies to exalted nature of man, 118.
God, makes way into heart of man, if opening no bigger than eye of needle, 43.
God, not absentee deity, 333.
God, soul wings aloft to, when prayer saturated with tears, 222.
God-like, to be, must attain harmony in inner life, and in relations with others, 221.
God's Name, mentioning of, in conversation, deprecated, 332.
Godward, man ascends, when divested of crude, material desires, 222.
Goethe, *Faust*, 277.
Grace, pronounced over food, real purpose of, 126.
Graetz, H., 322, 353.
Greek, no single work in, as perfect, in external form and inner content, as Bible, 177.
Gruenvald, J., 320.
Gruenwald, Moritz, 275, 289.
Guide to the Perplexed, Maimonides, 51, 52.

Halevi, J. 90, 201, 276.
Hananeel, 89, 103.
Ha-Sardi, Samuel ben Isaac, 231.
Hebrew language, mastery of, urged, 341–342.
Heresy, the, Shabbethai Zebi, 321.
Heron, the, and lion, fable of, to illustrate wisdom, when in clutches of mighty, not to regret privileges denied, but be grateful for injuries escaped, 32.

Historian, literary, task of, ix.
Homily, the, study of, part of educational curriculum of Jew, vii; examples of early, 9–11; structure and development of early, 10–14; legalistic, 13–14; proemic, 11; limitations of early, 192; conclusion, 35; meant to supplement, not supplant, literal meaning of text, 154.
Humanism, spirit and temper of, 229.

Ibn Ezra, 134, 201, 209, 276.
Ibn Gabirol, 134; criticism of *piyut* for Atonement service, 183.
Ibn Janaḥ, grammatical works of, 134.
Ibn Sina, 134.
Ibn Tibbon, 52, 53, 90.
Illustration, the, need of, in preaching, 204; spirit of, 63–64; kinds, 24–35; sources, 24, 258–260; examples, 204–206.
Imitation, of non-Jew, desirable if of virtues, reprehensible if of vices, 348.
Immortality, literal belief and mystical expression of, 122.
Impious, exaltation of philosophy over theology, 136.
Individual, the, salvation of race through improvement of, 179; security of, impossible when life of group in jeopardy, 355.
Infinite, the, when in tune with, heart vibrates with heavenly music, 221.
Inquiry, obligation of free, 216; preceded by life of obedience, 265.
Interpretation, task of student of Torah, 49–51; literal and traditional, 209; allegorical, 107, 163, 209–214; adds "honey" of original thought to "milk" of transmitted truth, 163; untrammeled use, feared, 140; kabbalistic, 106, 184.
Inventions, use of, not one's own, 240.
Inwardness, religious, essential to ritual and ethical practice, 81–83.
Isaac ben Eliakim of Posen, *Leb Tob*, 341.
Israel, character of, 43–44; indispensability, 45, 127; merits, 127; nature of uniqueness, 44–45; tasks, 41–42, 225, 266–270, 351; need of preserving integrity, 352; special privilege, 85–86; when faithless, falls prey to enemy attacks, 21–22; must fight, not with weapons of steel, but with implements of spirit, 225; hope for, 128, 189, 351.
Israeli, 134.

Jacob ben Jeremiah Mattithia Halevi, *Tam Veyashar*, 341.
Jacob of Wojslow, 324.
Jellinek, A., 324, 325, 368.
Jew, Spanish, berated for being "Jew in name only," 188.
Jewish Theology, Kohler, K., 38.
Jews, the, position of, more favorable because "subjects of King," 186–187.
Josephus, 201.
Joy, religious duties to be performed with, 344; secular, and religious, contrasted, 338.

Judaism, comprehensive character of, 46; exposition of teachings, 38–45; cardinal principles, 292–293; core of message, 42; demands inner integrity, not external conformity, 346; democratic aim, 268; embodied in traditional institutions, 233; Christianity and, 86; Mohammedanism and, 86; superior methods, 86; sureness of perpetuation, 189.
Judaism, Moore, G. F., 38.
Judaism and asceticism, incompatibility of, 83–84, 335–336.

Kabbalah, mysteries of, not intended for masses, 107–108.
Kahana, David, *Toldot Hammekubbalim Beyisroel*, 322.
Katzenellenbogen, Samuel Judah, sermons of, 226, 231.
Kawana, determining factor in efficacy of prayer, 299.
Kimḥi, David, 89, 134.
King, the, and invited guests, parable of, to illustrate need of spiritual preparedness, 28–29.
Kley, E. 368.
Knowledge, secular, need of, 62–64; laying whole realm under tribute, 63; inadequacy of, 217–220; no substitute for action, 266; source of contentment, when imparted to others, 220.
Kohler, K., *Origins of Synagogue and Church*, 4; *Jewish Theology*, 38.
Koran, the, 354.

Labor, blessing, not curse, 19–20; for necessaries, not luxuries, 181.
Law, the, equality of all men before, 42; nature and purpose of, 127; aim of Mosaic, 181; instruction in, 5; not calculated to overburden, 15; human nature and, 124; written and oral, 80, 264.
Layman, the, potential influence of, 329–331.
Learning, need of, from all men, 63–64; "break nut open, enjoy meat, and discard shell," 64.
Leaven, removal of, before Passover, symbolic of need to eschew "leaven" from heart, 107.
Legend, the, as illustration in sermon, 32–35; of Alexander the Great and eagle, 207; Caesar, Augustus, and Crown, 358; Danaus and sieve, 207; Sisyphus and stone, 206.
Life, integrity of, 46; spiritual significance of simple, 124, 309, 363; to rejoice in simple, is to grow to full stature of man, 309; man's task in, to purge soul of grosser elements, 211; to breathe spirit of religion into, 44; medieval conditions of Jewish, 130–131.
Lion, the, and heron, fable of, to illustrate wisdom, when in clutches of lion, to be grateful for injuries escaped, and not bemoan privileges withdrawn, 32.
Literature, Greek and Jewish, contrasted, 177.
Loans, secured by collateral, attended by diminution of faith in God, 291.
Love, parental, knows to give by withholding, 314.

Luntshitz, Ephraim Solomon, life of, 273–275; works, 280–281; originality, 277–279; composite character as preacher, 282; theory of preaching, 281–288; structure of sermon, 304–306; homiletical exegesis, 307–312; use of illustrations, 312–315; loath to ascribe value to kabbalistic interpretation of Scripture, 311; theory of Jewish education, 296–298; outlook and message, 288–303; contribution to homiletics, 275–279, 316.
Luria, Solomon, 273; attack of, on scandal-mongers, 289.
Luxury, love of, deprecated, 247, 249; dims spiritual vision, 363.

Madburg, David ben Joseph, 325.
Maimonides, M., 53, 65, 90, 176, 201, 258, 276, 303; method of scriptural interpretation of, opposed, 53; chief merit as expounder, 65; attempt to make phenomenon of prophecy plausible, disputed, 176; gave impetus to scholastic preaching in Synagogue, 141–142.
Malmad, the, of Anatoli, classification of contents, 55.
Man, place of, in cosmos, 40–41, 78; threefold relation in life: to God, fellow-man, himself, 210; exalted nature, 43–44; came pure from God, bearing no stains from birth, 179; angels herald approach of, saying: "make room for image of God," 43; compounded of earthly and heavenly ingredients, earthly to be transfigured to likeness of heavenly by discipline of Torah, 43; replica of nature, 118; matter pervaded by spirit, 216; disunity in inner life, 119; free moral agent, not slave of external conditions, 178.
Mani, father of doctrine of dualism, 170.
Manichaeism, doctrine of, 134.
Manoaḥ Hendel Kirchhahn, *Simḥat Hanefesh*, 341
Marriage, early, frowned upon, 181; deferred for financial reasons, deprecated, 337.
Marry, not to, until one have wherewithal to support family, 85.
Material, the, sublimation of, 293–294; pursuit after, 335; road to spiritual, 115, 123, 180; relation to spiritual like scaffolding to edifice: needed for completion but extraneous to later uses, 180.
Medieval, opprobrium of term, viii.
Meir Hamburg, 91.
Melodies, synagogal, filched from operatic arias, 346.
Menaḥem ben Moses Rabba, sermons of, 57.
Menorah, opposite Table, in Tabernacle, symbolical significance of, 107.
Metrology, knowledge of, needed to define just weights and measures, 353.
Meturgeman, the, function of, 7; decline of office, 8.
Midrash, the, main collections of, 9–10; composite character, 47; value as source of Judaism, 37–38.
Money, influence of, variable, like sun: bleaching linen, and tanning face of laundress, 115.
Moon, full, best time for wedding, 126–127.
Moore, G. F. *Judaism*, 38.

Mordecai Ha-Kohen, 321.
Mosaic Laws, purpose of, to safeguard native purity of soul, 181.
Moscato, Judah, life of, 195; and Renaissance, 227; contrasted with Figo, 240–241; theory of preaching, 202–204; structure and style of sermons, 195–199; homiletical exegesis, 210–214; illustrative material and method, 204–207; conclusion of sermon, 214–215; outlook and message, 215–225; predilection for mysticism, 222–224; contribution to homiletics, 192–194, 215, 226.
Moses, and the lamb, legend of, to illustrate truth that qualification for leadership is determined by faithfulness in vocation, 33.
Moses ben Joshua of Narbonne, Commentary to Maimuni's *Guide*, 185.
Moses of Kutnow, 325.
Motive and method, in religion, 81, 266.

Naḥmanides, Moses, 89, 96, 103, 258.
Name, God's, mentioning of, in conversation, deprecated, 332.
Nationalism, Jewish, nature of, 44–45.
Nature, and man, 43.
Nature, human, defence of, 162.
Noachian laws, the, to be observed by prospective proselytes, 86.

Observances, Jewish and pagan, contrasted, 338.
Occasions, special religious, meant for preacher's instruction, 61.
One, God, Torah and Israel are, 39, note 94.
Oral Law, partakes of binding power of written Law, 80, 264.
Ordinances, religious, function of, 293; indifference to, bemoaned,237.
Ostentation, love of, deprecated, 349.

Paganism, essence of, 18.
Parable, the, as means of interpreting Scripture, 27–29; as illustrative material in sermon, 27–29, 171–173, 314–315; examples: merchant and fair, 314; courtier and king's sword, 260; hero and king's decree, 315–316; cabin passenger and drunkard in hold, 355-356.
Past, the, reverence of, more for remote than immediate, viii; valuable as teacher of present, 374.
Paul (Solomon) Burgensis, 135.
Peace, sum of all virtues, 150.
Persecution, religious, harmful and beneficial effects of, 186–187, 268, 350.
Perspective, essential to religion, 122–124.
Pharisees, 5.
Pharmacology, knowledge of, needed to understand nature of incense compounded for use in Temple, 353.
Philanthropy, posthumous, like candle-light trailing behind wayfarer, 115;

robbing for, like prostitute selling body for apples to distribute among sick, 26.
Philo, 201, 354.
Philosophers, true and false, 218–219.
Philosophy, relation to theology, 176–177, 218; servant of theology, not master, 176; philosophy relies on reason, revelation transcends reason, Ibid.; religious uses of, 120; true philosophy never foe, always friend, of religion, 218.
Phylacteries, the, widespread laxity in use of, bemoaned, 99–100.
Physics, proclaims mighty works of God, 353.
Physiology, knowledge of, needed to apply laws of physical purity, 353.
Pico de Mirandola, 201.
Piety, religious, true nature of, 44.
Pirke Rabbi Eliezer, 366.
Piyuṭim, lacking in elements of devotion, 312; special strictures of some, 183.
Plato, 134; philosophy of, confirming tenets of Judaism, 218.
Pleasure, physical, the sublimation of, 83–85, 293, 338.
Plessner, S., 368.
Pollak, H. J., 134; commendation of *Commentary* to Arama's sermons, 168.
Poor, the, exploitation of, excoriated, 239.
Possessions, material and spiritual, intended for good of group, 270; ceaseless striving after, gravest of evils, 290–291; not to possess us, but be possessed by us, 308; increase with giving, like milk in mother's breast, 259.
Practices, unseemly, of past, must be changed, 349–350.
Prayer, nature of, 5; function and purpose, 82–83, 222; efficacy, 263; spiritual fruits, 182–183; requirements for acceptable, 345; aspiration and petition, 299; direct approach to God's presence, 344; when saturated with tears, soul wings aloft unto God, 222; acceptable in vernacular, 345.
Preacher, the, personal fitness of, 287; equipment, 50, 142; moral character, 60–61, 235; temper, 58–59, 65–66; task, 15, 16, 278, 282, 284, 285; magnitude of task confronting medieval, 132; responsibility, 60, 235; scholarly methods, 50; teacher of Law and, 49–50; physician and, 258; function, 9, 233–234; aim, 327–329; practical idealism of early, 46; technique and message, 36–37; art of medieval, 132; exponent of inwardness, 373; merged new methods with old, 376; successor of prophet, 371.
Preaching, practice of, deep-rooted in past, 142; Scribes and, 3; Prophets and, 3; fondness of masses of, 46–47; need of, 59–60; theories of, 58–66, 96–97, 154–156, 202–204, 233–236, 281–288, 326–332; scriptural, 92–93; philosophical, 136, 144–145; scholastic, 141–142; prophetic, 285; limitations of prophetic, 286–288; difficulties involved in scriptural, 93–94; deterrents to hortatory, 328; qualities of good, 241; courageous, 328–329; joy in, 327; character of medieval, 371; use of foreign sources in, 201–202; ritual insistence, 372; exposition and religious information, 93; exhortation and positive instruction, 203; influence of Christian methods

and style on Jewish, 140–141; influence of Revival of Learning on Jewish, ix, 193, 227–231; lack of originality in old-time, 133.
Preparedness, spiritual, need of, illustrated by parable of king and invited guests, 28–29.
Privilege and responsibility, 87, 270.
Problem, Jewish, attempted solution of, by medieval preacher, 374–375.
Proem, the, meaning and use of, 11; probable origin, 12.
Profession, God's, unremitting practice of justice, 121.
Progress, social, spiritual nature and purpose of, 183–184.
Prophecy, mystery of, still baffling reason, 176.
Prophet, earliest preacher, 3; not opponent of priest, but coworker, 372.
Proselytism, discouraged, 86.
Prostitution, subsidization of, by community, severely condemned, 176.
Provençal brothers, 195.
Provençal, Moses, 198.
Proverb, the, as illustration in early homilies, 26–27.
Providence and chance, 332–333; individual, 162, 178, 262–263.
Publius Ovidius, 201.
Pulpit, task of medieval Jewish, 131–132; timidity in, 328–329; influence of Christian on Jewish, 135–136.
Pythagoreans, 353.

Quintilianus, 201.
"Quips and cranks," in sermons, as in general literature, 201; examples of, 200.

Rabbah bar bar Ḥana, allegorical adventures of, 166.
Rashi, 89, 103.
Rationalists, in biblical exposition, condemned, 185.
Reason, place of, in religion, 265–266; revelation and, 80; limitations of, 120; powerless to guide when groping in dark; higher light needed to illumine path, 219.
Reformation, the, reaction of Catholic hierarchy to, and effect on Jew, 229.
Reifmann, Jacob, 91.
Religion, and life, 46; ethics and, 220, 263–264; form and substance of, 83; motive and method in, 81–82; refining influence of, 124; universal character of, 119.
Renaissance, the, spirit of, 229–230; influence on Jewish preaching, ix, 140, 193; pride of authorship and, 47.
Repentance, doctrine of, 84; efficacy, 263; pearl of, 312.
Research, success of, in religion, conditioned by disciplined practical conduct, 265.
Restoration, Israel's, hope for, 128, 225, 269, 351.

Resurrection, bodily, argument for belief in, 123; reason why denied one who derives livelihood from interest on loans, 366.
Revelation, attested by experience, 264; reason and, 80, 176.
Reward, promise of, for obedience, material and immediate, to appeal to mass-mind, 122.
Righteous, the, dying childless, not barren of progeny, 20.
Ring, Haman's, given to Mordecai, symbolical significance of, 107.
Rites, religious, purpose of, 82–83; significance, 126; educational discipline, 372; to breathe spirit of religion into whole of life, 44; spiritual results, 182; violation graver than infraction of Mosaic ordinance, 346.
Ritual "honors," system of rotation devised, 346.
Routine, lifeless, and devotion, 348; evil effect of mechanical, 344.

Saadia, 89, 201, 276.
Sabbath rest, intended for spiritual stimulation, 61, 181; widespread laxity in observance of, 100.
Sacred, the, and secular, no line of demarcation drawn by early preachers, 46; sense of, sure safeguard against slightest infraction of moral law, 307.
Saints, non-Jewish, practicing asceticism, cruel and foolish, 83.
Salomon, G., 368.
Satan, symbol of earthly nature, 79.
Schechter, S., *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, 38.
Scholastic preaching, in Synagogue, given impetus by Maimonides, 141–142.
Schools for married students, urged, 342–343.
Sciences, the natural, knowledge of, needed for comprehension of Torah, 62–63, 276, 353; their light, light of moon, borrowed; Torah's, light of sun, original, 218.
Scot, Michael, 54.
Scriptures, the, rabbinic use of, 69; source of illustrative material, 23, 360; power to dissipate darkness and rebuild society, 101–102.
Scroll, the, reading from, 6.
Self-denial, practices of, designed to plant humility in soul, 126.
Self-reliance, illustrated by parable of king and hero of province, 314–315.
Seliḥot, composed by Luntshitz in commemoration of invasion of Prague, in 1611, 276.
Seneca, 201.
Sermon, the, origin of, 3; traced to Moses, 92; Jewish creation, 3; rise in Synagogue, 9; early form, 10–12; early introduction to, 11; function of, 327; evolution, 139–141; salient characteristics, 52; indispensable elements: sound substance and artistic form, 202; elaborateness of medieval, 130; extensive influence, 133; comprehensive character, 132; alien influences on Jewish, 140; as criticism of life, 235–236; character of eighteenth-century, 317–319; proper content of, 303; conclusion, 260–261; essence, 36; evolutionary nature, 370.

Sermons, classification of: Anatoli's, 55; Baḥya's, 95; Arama's, 137–138; Moscato's, 196; Figo's, 233–234; Luntshitz', 280–281; Eybeshitz', 324–325.
Sermons, cultural value of, 76–77; difficulties attending critical study, 56–58; fragmentary character of early, 46–47; transmission of medieval, 57; first volume of complete, 47; important as literature, vii; source of cultural history, 76–77; part of educational curriculum of Jew, vii; popular in early period, 46–47; embody philosophy of preacher, 261; need of just appreciation of, ix.
Service, God's, perfect freedom, 128.
Sexes, the, free commingling of, for recreational purposes, frowned upon, 339, 349; different days allocated, for visiting cemetery, 340; engaged man not permitted to call on fiancée more than once a month, 340.
Shabbethai Zebi, 321.
"Silence is gold, if speech is silver," quoted as popular saying, 97.
Simple life, the, requisite for preservation of Jew, 190.
Sin, sickness of soul, 258.
Sisyphus, and the stone, poetic legend of, to illustrate futility of philosopher's efforts, 206.
Society, urban, evil influences of, 125; well-being of individual bound up with welfare of, 355.
Socrates, request of, for cock to be sacrificed at burial, allegorical reason of, 212.
Solidarity, Jewish, essential to task of Jew, 352.
Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, Schechter, S., 38.
Soul, to bring nigh unto God, is to create it anew, 18.
Soul, the, original purity of, 179; pervades body, not tacked onto, 216; cannot live on what intellect feeds, 217.
Spheres, the, doctrine of, theory of divine emanations in Kabbalah, 106.
Spira, Isaac, 320.
Spira, Nathan, 320.
Spiritual, the, relation of to material, 180.
Spirituality, meaning of, 293–294; want of, 292.
Stars, the, position of, at moment of birth, determining factor in fate of individual, 106, 359; power transcended by God's will, 106; decree nullified by power of prayer, 106; proffer code of social ethics, 362.
Statues, use of, as decorations in home, reprobated, 348.
Stimulation, spiritual, afforded by rites and ceremonies, 124.
Story, the, illustrative use of, 169–170; lion and soldier, 206; tiger and deliverer, Ibid.; Mani and Babylonian king, 170.
Succah, the, symbolic significance of, 63, 214.
Success, material, worship of, 180.
Suffering, good produced by, 350.
Superstition, folly of, 79; refraining to do certain task on given day, 126.

Syllogism, Treatise on the, Al-Farabi, 54.
Symbols, religious, function of, 70–71; importance of use, 125–126.
Synagogue, the, rise of, 4; within precincts of Temple, 5; liturgy, 5; plastic character, 139; indecorum, condemned, 100, 346, 349.

Taine, H. A., vii.
Targum, the, origin of, 8.
Tax, the communal, evasion of, excoriated, 98.
Text, the, transparent, 15–16; obscure, 16–20; allegorical, 20–21; relative, 21–22; pictorial, 22–23; homiletical meaning of, to supplement, not supplant, literal, 154; rabbinical, given primacy by some preachers, 199.
Theatres, frequenting, deplored, 340.
Theologians, Christian, commended for putting theology above philosophy, 176.
Thomas Aquinas, gave impetus to scholastic preaching in Church, 141–142.
Toga, wrapping in, not one's own, 240.
Tongue, the, utterance of, like arrow shot from bow, beyond recall, 22.
Torah, the, nature of, 5, 41, 217; methods, 43; universal character, 42; essence, 42; special connotation: careful probing of truth embodied in Scriptures, 61; expression of divine will, 41–44, 264; discipline, 73; source of universal knowledge, 218–219; source of all secular wisdom, 120; generator of religious atmosphere, 124; pathway to God, 17,122; aim, to enhance not imperil life, 11; plan for harmonious living, 120; to lead man into path of righteousness, 64; intended for all time, 171; study incumbent on all, 341; source of spiritual nourishment for all, 65; purpose of study: piety more than learning, 341; menace of rationalism, 184; neglect of study, 102; reasons for decline of love for, 342–343.
Tradition, means of uniting community of Israel, 267.
Transition period, in evolution of sermon, 192–193.
Traveler, the, in desert, and tree in oasis, parable of, applied to Abraham blessed beyond compare, 28.
Travels, the, of Benjamin of Tudela, 134.
Triumph, paeans of, flow from life of faith, 21.
Truth, poetic and historic, 208; religious and philosophic, 120; accessibility of spiritual, 265; not vitiated by human inconsistencies, 61; best learned from earth's undeviating regularity, 308.

Unity, principle of, manifest in nature, 118; belief in God's, fundamental to religious life, 68; redemptive power of Israel's, shortcoming of one redeemed by strength of other, 21.
Uri of Dresden, 325.
Usury, all forms of, condemned, 239.

Vernacular, the Aramaic, and reading from Law, 6.
Vernacular, the, prayer acceptable in, 345.
Vine, the, Israel like, supported by lifeless rods; receives staying power from dead forebears, 23.
Vision, the prophet's, for good of Israel: fence, for protection of garden, shepherd, for care of flock, 25–26.

Wealth, in hands of few, concentration of, great evil, 290; individual possessor trustee of, 270.
Wedding-ring, the, symbolic significance of, 63, 68.
Weissmann, Arthur S., 324, 325.
Well-being, individual's, bound up with welfare of society, 355.
Wheat, the, chaff and stubble, allegory of, to illustrate truth that fruitfulness determines worth of nation, 30.
Wife, in selecting, not social environment, but personal virtues be stressed, 311.
Wigs, wearing of by men, unpraiseworthy imitation, 348.
Wisdom, sacred and secular, contrasted, 120.
Women, commingling with, disapproved, 339; staring at, condemned, Ibid; more susceptible to religious appeal than men, 17; entrusted with education of young, Ibid.
Word, sacred, tiny window through which initiates see wondrous mysteries, 223.
Word, the spoken, sinks deep into heart, and sprouts forth into good deeds, 234.
Words, play on, in medieval sermons, 200.
World, the, redemption of, possible only through perfection of individual, 179.
Worship, of heart and mind, 8–9; essentials, 5; Torah and, 6; indecorum in house of, reprobated, 300; halting of, to redress personal wrong, condemned, 302.

Ẏalkut, 92, 366.
Ẏelamdenu, halaḫic exordium, 12–14.

Ẓohar, the, apophthegm concerning God, Torah, and Israel, rightly ascribed to, 39, note 94.
Zunz, Leopold, ix, 57, 231, 277.

Date Due

[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
JUN 15 1995			
	PRINTED	IN U. S. A.	

BM730 .B56
Studies in Jewish preaching : Middle
Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 00035 7808